Moly

A Book of Poems

Curtis May

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MOLY

A BOOK OF POEMS

BY

CURTIS MAY

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MOLY.

A PLANT whose little candle lights the leaves
With one white flame, fed by a bulbous root!
No garland from its stars the maiden weaves;
The peasant treads it with unheeding foot.
Yet Homer pressed it on an endless page.
Ah, dull, black root, what growth has burst from thee
And lived to be the schoolboy's heritage,
Preserved by thought for all the world to see!

Thou hast a blessing that is all thy own.
Thou dost preserve from danger and from sin;
No Circe-charm from unclean thoughts have grown
Where thy faint essence finds an entrance in.
Dull, homely flower that blooms in fancied ground!
Unseen the fingers are that break thy stem,—
Yet virtue in thy wholesome draught is found,
And they that sip—no snares are spread for them.

I, too, have gathered moly where it grows—
Some in dense forest, some in shady glen,
Some in the sun, with heart's-ease and with rose,
Some in the fields, self-sown amid the grain.

And some, where frightened thought vibrates toward God,
My reverent hand has gathered over graves,
Where the close seam knits ruptured sod to sod,
And all the churchyard rolls in verdant waves.

My bunch of moly, plucked in after time!
A hand that loves thee lays thee on the leaf.
And binds thy modest fragrance into rhyme
That thou mayst live thy life, however brief.
If some tired hand should hold thee for a space,
Or, hung above thee, some sad eye grow bright,—
Yield up all that thou hast of humble grace,
Nor mourn that after day there must be night.

THE SECRET OF THE TOWER.

HARK! The old tower-bell peals one!
An hour ago, and all was still
As when the crimson-setting sun
Sank down behind the western hill.
All was as still, an hour ago,
As those low, dreaming reeds, that grow
Upon the waveless river shore;—
Or lips, that never shall speak more.

Is it the wind that wails aloud
Around the gray, old castle wall?
Or did a heavy-hearted cloud
Send out from heaven that piteous call?

There is not wind enough to shake
The lilies in their placid lake,
And not a cloud obscures the light
That points the torches of the night.

And, yet, the cry is shrill and clear
  That echoes through the quiet night,
And falls upon the startled ear
  With timorous quavers of affright.
And see! Up in the old gray tower,
Veiled by the shadows of the hour,
A strange, dim radiance is shed ;—
And yet the moonlight long is dead.

Up in the little, lofty room,
  Where the wide windows faintly glow,
The tranquil spiders plied the loom
  In careless toil, an hour ago.
Now, all is changed! The stained walls seem
Hung with the glories of a dream,
And tapestries, fold thick on fold,
Are caught apart by clasps of gold.

And, here and there, a picture lends
  Its magic to the magic scene,
And in the shadowy corner bends
  Against the wall the painted screen ;
The antique, carven mantel shows
Its inlaid wealth of India snows,
And ebon panels, richly set,
With gleams of red and violet.

There in the centre two men stand,
Just where the light shines full and bright,
And one holds in his clenchéd hand
A sword that flames far in the night.
And one is young, and one is old:
The three score years of one are told,
While, for the other, life's fair spring
Sends all her flying birds to sing.

Why does that dark brow, like a cloud
Hang heavy o'er the angry eyes?
What does that cruel mouth shriek loud
That echoes in such fearful wise?
"Life has no more for you, old man!
Now guard your honor if you can!"
From sheath to hand leaps up the blade,
But, ere it falls, the hand is stayed.

"Oh, think before you strike the blow!
Life's pleasant springs shall walk in green
And sparkling winters come and go,
Nor shall that blood-stained hand grow clean.
Yet pause! The rigid arm of Death
Must stop erelong this fluttering breath,
And, though you hated to the end,
At last there is not foe nor friend.

"Still life is precious to the old!
What matter if the pulse be slow,
Or if Time's falling sands of gold
Are tarnished when the glass runs low.
The old songs thrill upon the tongue,
The heart forgets it is not young,

And life's last embers blaze once more
Before their grateful warmth is o'er."

Alas ! The young arm, lifted high,
  Has no respect before old age,
And that fierce glow that lights the eye
  Reflects a burning inward rage.
A moment, and the deed is done !
Oh, haste away, before the sun
Shines down upon that frozen face,
And seeks in vain life's last faint trace.

But now the first dim beams of day
  Come shimmering through the sunken glade,
And those weird figures melt away,
  Departing with departing shade.
Two faces, locked in deadly hate,
Sullen, defiant, glare at fate,
Then dimmer, dimmer, dimmer gleam,
Like broken tangles of a dream.

The tapestries, that sweep about
  And fold their richness through the room
Have lost their silken garlands out,
  And vanished with the vanished gloom.
A ray of light comes stealing in,
And creeps along a floor worn thin,
And fretted ceiling, woven across
With lacey webs of spider-floss.

The ivy clings, with small, green hands,
  Around the weather-beaten eaves ;
The great oak rustles, where he stands,

And breathes through all his thousand leaves.
The doves, with crimson-padded feet,
Sedately pace the window-seat,
And cast their shadows on the floor
Where human footsteps sound no more.

If one should ask, what was the strife,
And if the shapes were mortal men,
Tradition wakes her tongue to life,
And whispers through the years since then:
"Two knights, who bore a common name;
A crime that stained their arms with shame:
Two souls that never can forget,
But wander unforgiving yet!"

Old tower, gray tower, so bleak and high!
A long hill kneels before your face,
And cloudy outlines of the sky
Float downward toward you, in your place.
What is the all-pervading charm
To fold that past crime in your arm,
To claim a dead wrath for your own,
And press it to your heart of stone?

Do you not know that years will bring
A slow, sure change to your grim height?
Where ivy-fingers clasp and cling,
Where dappled pigeons whir and light,
The wall will crumble, bit by bit,
And sweeping round and over it,
The wind will wrench great stones away
And whirl them in the glade some day.

And, sometime, when the world is old,
A dreaming youth shall wander past,
And watch the broken threads of gold
That sun-striped clouds upon you cast ;
And he will say : " This fallen heap
Was built for men ; but now, they sleep !
If love, if hate, or joy, or woe
Had being here—ah, who can know ! "

And, sometime, when the autumn air
Veils all things with its filmy gauze,
A flock of pigeons, flying there,
Shall see the stately oak, and pause.
And they will coo, " There was a day
Doves fluttered here ! "—and fly away.
Then sink your hopes, strong mass of stone !
Thereafter you shall be alone.

BEATRICE CENCI.

OH, sad, sweet mouth of the picture,
If only your lips could part
They would tell a tale of anguish,
That pierced, once, a blithe, young heart !
But the heart broke
Ere the lips spoke.

The tender hopes of a maiden
One day froze into despair.
No word rang out in the silence
To speak of the struggle there.

Was it less true
In that none knew?

Oh, eyes of sorrow eternal!
A world has wept at your grief!
Long life has the painted shadow,
But the real, hard life was brief.
You have known long,
Sighs become song.

IN SORROW.

SORROW has laid its heavy hand,
O Friend, upon thine heart to still it:
Yet doubt not thou shalt rise up knight
From that long touch, if thou dost will it.

There is, in grief's unwished-for call,
An undertone, "Friend, come up higher!"
For every mountain ever formed
Sprang forth from agonies of fire.

Think not to tremble at the stroke,
But bare thy breast, nor fear to rue it:
And, if thy body wear away,
'T is but to let the soul shine through it.

TRANSPLANTED.

THERE were three lilies, tinct with cream,
That blew upon a single stem,—
'T was in the garden of a dream,—
And heart-shaped leaves surrounded them
In close, cool groups, knit edge on edge,
That danced upon a shelving ledge.

A cloudy hand of silver mist
Stretched down, and broke the stalk in two.
The leaves, hemmed in a woven twist,
Closed o'er the wound, as hurt hearts do.
A humming-bird went darting by,
And drained each waxen chalice dry.

My friend, I know it was a dream!
But, as I turn and mark you there,
Three scentless lilies, tinct with cream,
Star the fine darkness of your hair.
You smile; and, as I look at you,
I almost think the dream is true.

LITTLE HANDS.

TWO little hands of white,
Folded upon the breast,
Draw me into the night,
Away from home and rest,—

Out to a churchyard dim
  Where wavering shadows fall,
And quivers in every limb
  The willow beside the wall,—

On to a tiny mound,
  With hollow either side,
Where, in the cold, damp ground,
  We laid the child that died.

TO LIZZIE.

MAY the peaceful years, as they roll along,
  Be marked by snatches of faint, sweet song :
May the fingers of Time be lightly laid
On the ringlet caught into silver braid,
And may no sad tears from thine eyes be wrung,
But tender hope keep the old heart young.

THE GOLDEN-ROD.

THE golden-rod ! The golden-rod !
  Its shining clusters pierced the sod,
And sunbeams slipped down from the sky
To view their doubles, eye to eye.
We pressed the fallen gentian-stars,
And, through the open meadow-bars,
We passed where tasselled corn stood green,
With broad leaves opening between.
We looked, with innocent, great eyes,
And cheeks that glowed with glad surprise,

We looked, and found that all was good.
Soft voices called us from the wood,
Sweet faces smiled, amid the fern,
With joy that we were swift to learn.
The whole wide universe was ours.
For us the summer gave her flowers,
For us the spring came bubbling up,
And soft dews filled the lily's cup,
For us the evening sky grew red,
And burned in blushes overhead.
But naught cared we for gentian blue
That burst the broken hedges through,
Nor did we watch the corn-ears nod.
With gathered bloom of golden-rod
We trudged along the grassy way
To where the village churchyard lay :
With little faces shy, yet brave,
We sought the stranger's sunken grave,
And heaped our yellow treasure there
Like sunshine, pressed out from the air.

Ah well ! The years have slipped away,
And life's first twilight dims our day.
The shadows overlap the red,
And sorrows come, with stealthy tread.
Broad coins are dearer than the store
Of yellow flowers we counted o'er.
Yet, sometimes, when the children come,
And stand within the cheerful room,
They bring the fallen gentian-stars
That twinkle round the meadow-bars,
And heavy plumes of golden-rod
That burst their bright path through the sod.

Oh, then our childish dreams creep in
And purify our hearts from sin :
The spirits of those by-gone years
Glide past, and look at us through tears.
We see the happy little band,
The big bunch in the baby-hand,
And where the stranger's grave is found
They heap their blossoms on the ground.

O pardoned soul, in realms remote !
Leave from thy song one single note ;
Lean down from heaven's parapet,
And turn thy gaze on earth once yet.
Behold those innocent child-eyes,
Upturned to watch the solemn skies,
If, haply, through the shaken air,
An angel sweep down, unaware.
Mark but the tender thought they bring :—
And then begin once more to sing ;
Turn full thy face to that of God.—
Dost thou not bless the golden-rod ?

THE SUMMER RAIN.

IT falls—the beautiful summer rain !
The pearly drops on my window beat ;
I hear them patter against the pane,
Bright little fairies with dew-shod feet.

It falls ! It beats on the open grave,
It raises the lily's drooping head ;
But no sweet shower can healing have
That thrills the blank heart of the dead.

THE FLOWER-ANGELS.

WHEN evening comes, with drooping wing,
To fold o'er fairy bells that swing
Vibrating everywhere,
Down on the moon's long rays of light
The flower-sprites, with robes of white,
Glide through the darkening air.

In tiny tubes the dew they bring,
And tender strains they faintly sing,
As to each bud they fly ;
The thirsty blossom holds its cup,
The heaven-sent angels fill it up,
Then swiftly flutter by.

But when the first faint flush of dawn
Proves night's brief sway has quickly gone,
They melt into the mist,—
Their wind-tossed tresses backward spread,
And round their brows a halo shed
Golden and amethyst.

THE ALPINE HORN.

OH listen, listen ! O'er the mountains ringing
Comes the deep echo of the Alpine horn ;
High with the avalanche's white foot clinging,
The melody to distant peaks is borne.

The reeds that fringe the mountain-lake are bending,
And stir in answer to that mellow call;
The eagle, from his lofty heights descending,
Seeks the strong nest built on the rocky wall.

The chasms are full of music. Golden glisten
The snowy caps that crown the ruddy morn.
We breathe the harmony. Oh, listen, listen!
Hail the clear ringing of the Alpine horn.

THREE SHIPBOARD PICTURES.

I.

NO ship is in sight! The wide horizon
Unites with its faint line sky and ocean.
There hovers above the last blue motion
The fiery cloud the red sun lies on.
He lies there in state a moment only.
The cloud closes up, like clutching fingers,
And holds in its grasp the sun suspended,
Then hurls to the waves that beat below it.
But still in the sky his glory lingers,
It waves and it quivers, in golden rims on
Those trumpets of cloud that breathe and blow it;
As, tremulous, fading, kindling, dying,
It mocks with its glow the straining vision,
Till ocean and sky are dark and lonely.
Yet, after the sunset long is ended,

There lives in the soul a dream Elysian
Of wandering lights on a field of crimson,
Of fiery arrows forever flying,
With ripples, and mist, and cloud-streaks blended.

II.

Slow and deep, the water's song
Breathes the lifted keel along.
Calm and low, the evening sky
Hangs its banners out on high.
Would you think that all could be
Brightly flushed on cloud and sea,
When a baby sinks down, down,
To the sea-weeds, dank and brown?

Hugging to his marble breast
One white rose to share his rest,
Living rose and baby dead
Through the parted waves have sped.—
Mother, in the home you seek,
Will you kiss a little cheek,
Will you smooth back tangled hair,
And forget that *this* was fair?

When the lightning hurls its dart
Will it pierce your restless heart?
When the waves dash to and fro,
And the tossing vessels go,
Laden deep, from land to land,
Will you see an icy hand,
In its grasp a single rose,
Folded where the sea-grass grows?

Some one's baby in the sea
Draws a parting thought from me.
Still the cut bud leaves a scar
Where the other roses are :
While the freighted ship goes on,
Still a mother sits alone,
And her frightened eyes stare back
Toward the wee grave in our track.

III.

The star-lighter, with broadened wing
Behind the red wheels of the day
Flew, where the twisted ladders cling
That link long leagues of milky way.
His breath swept onward, like the gale
That strikes the white breast of the sail ;
His eyes, aflame with bootless wrath,
Before him burnt his giddy path.

We could not see his angry look
From where we sat within the ship,
The finger shut within the book,
The word as close within the lip.
We only saw that, here and there,
A mellow ray stretched through the air,
And, star by star, the sky became
A trembling, waving sea of flame.

A sea above, a sea below ;
Between two seas we floated on !
All this was but an hour ago,
Yet every yellow gleam is gone.

They hung and shook, with beauteous fear,
Until the cruel wind came near,
Who caught his breath, with wail and shout,
And blew the starry candles out.

When will the spirit come again
That lit those far fires in the sky?
Will he not brush the heaving main
And hurl his torch where shadows lie?
Not even the moon dares show her light
To dip and whisper in the night.
As quiet as the breast in sleep,
The ship lies black upon the deep.

APRIL.

O APRIL, sacred to tears and laughter!
Thou modest dweller in country lanes!
Glad beams of sunshine shall follow after
The crystal drops of thy gentle rains.

For what if few are the blossoms willing
To heed the glance of thy quiet eyes!
The primrose sits in her low chair, filling
The earth's quick ear with impatient sighs.
The shooting-star has his fires all ready,
The snow-drop puts on her fresh white gown,
And grass-blades are holding a raindrop steady
For thirsty fibres to carry down.

The first anemone, flushed and trembling,
Is groping now with her slender hand ;
Forget-me-nots are in throngs assembling,
Beneath the ceiling of turf and sand ;
The violet fastens, with eager fingers,
Her peaked hood under her dainty chin ;
The soft-eyed daisy-bud shyly lingers,
Afraid of meeting the outside din.
The brook throws off all her frosty fetters,
And dons her bodice of meadow-grass ;
And ants spell stories, in rugged letters,
Wherever their dusky clusters pass.
The bees hum brokenly in the hedges,
The beetles form into caravans,
And ferns, that tremble along the ledges,
Are waving their green and half-curled fans.

O April, gleam into joyous smiling !
O April, cloud into sudden tears !
And free thy heart in a song, beguiling
The rosy springs of our few brief years !
If scarce thy flowers, yet thy buds are many,
And wild birds swing on thy branches bare,
And deep in woods and in reed-beds fenny
Is swept thy blessing of perfumed air.
Thou knowest naught of decay or sorrow :
Thou hast no thought that thy buds must die.
Why shouldst thou care for the dim to-morrow ?
To-day laughs yonder the wide, blue sky.
If grief is thine that no strong endeavor,
No end attained to thy lot may fall,—
Yet think that, in life and in action, ever
The vague, sweet promise is best of all.

THE SONG OF A DREAM-ANGEL.

LITTLE one, sleep! The snows gather fast,
And drearily float through the air.
Swiftly the cold, on the wings of the blast,
Sweepeth down from the Northland bare.
But dreamland is bright with lovely flowers,
And time rolls by in golden hours,
And little rills through meadows flow
Where bending reeds are dipping low,
And shining trout from the waters leap.—
Sleep, little one, sleep!

Little one, sleep! The darkness has flown
To chill the earth with its breath:
Paling, the sweet stars dimmer have grown,
Like eyes as they close in death.
But the wee dream-angels, robed in white,
Over the daisies roam all night;
And they press the little sleeper's hand,
And softly guide her o'er the land.
At morn, when the baby wakes, they weep.
Sleep, little one, sleep!

CLINTON—TWO YEARS OLD.

WHAT is loveliest, sweetest, best?
The tinted down on the dove's brown breast?
The vivid fire of the berries red
That cling to the green vines overhead?

The scent that dwells in the lily's heart?
The storm whence fiery arrows dart?
The breath of the sweet south, in the breeze
That sweeps through the fragrant locust-trees?
The faint rose-flush on the ocean-shell?
The gleams and glints on the waves that swell?

But the dove's soft breast will fall to dust,
And the scarlet berries shrink and rust.
The thirsty air will soon drink up
The perfume in the lily's cup.
The storm bears down upon its wing
Disease, and death, and suffering.
The odorous breeze goes quickly by;
The ocean-shell, with murmuring sigh,
Disintegrates upon the shore.
The gleams and glints are seen no more.

I know of something dearer far
Than sweet wild-phlox and roses are.
Two fearless eyes of honest brown
That melt to smiles the firmest frown;
A sunny mass of tangled hair
That dances, curling, in the air;
Two curving lips, that never yet
Have said one word they need regret;
Two dimpled hands, two sturdy feet,
In daring brave, in mischief fleet.

But if he grows to manhood's years,
And learns the need of bitter tears,
And finds his sweetest dreams untrue,
Yet cannot take his life anew

To build it up with knowledge gained,
Until the end sought is attained ;—
And if his yearning heart is thrilled
With longings not to be fulfilled,
And he, a man, like other men,
Must bear his load of grief—what then ?

Oh, then, with eyes that are not dim
Because misfortune falls to him ;
With tender lips that bravely smile
Though dark his life looms up the while ;—
Too proud, of work to be ashamed,
Although he never may be famed,
Though genius may not sit enthroned
Upon that brow, with patience crowned,
Acting as his own artisan
He shall become—a gentleman.

But if the frank, brown eyes should close,
And from the round cheeks fade the rose,—
And if the golden hair should lie
By time's rough hand left tenderly
Unturned to manhood's darker hue,—
Caught from the shadows wandered through,—
And if those lips should ne'er unseal
To words that tenderness reveal,
But keep, like robin, thrush, or wren,
An inarticulate love,—what then ?

Oh ! In some world exceeding ours,
Whose every path is sweet with flowers,
His soul, the purest thing there known,
By some wise instinct of its own

Selecting elements, will frame
Again a body, with the same
Sweet merry face, not older grown,
But unafraid, before the Throne ;
And he, an angel, baby-wise
Will smile in God's own answering eyes.

AMONG THE LILY-PADS.

IN among the lily-pads,
In the warm, clear weather,
Rocking in our tiny boat,
Just we three together.
O'er our heads, the clouded sky
Bends its shining arches,
As the day, in sullen pride,
All unnoticed, marches.

Years may come, and years may go ;
Life may find new meaning ;
Distant seas our barks may sail,
Strange skies o'er us leaning.
What is gained ? We only know—
Foul or pleasant weather—
Never shall we float again,
Just we three together.

OCTOBER SNOW.

THE gentian droops her fringéd lid ;
The green fern curls her tender feet ;
The last late rose, her beauty hid,
Sheds her sad petals, dried but sweet.

The mad wind tears across the wood ;
The long vines loose their tendril hold ;
The leaves that through the frost have stood
Pave all the ground with red and gold.

The white flakes dazzle as they pass
From branch to branch of yon tall tree,
Then gleam a moment on the grass,
And fade from being and from me.

THE EAGLE ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP.

THE eagle on the mountain top,
With wide wing beating through the sky,
With long, strong effort gathered up
His forces for one mighty cry.

It was not that an arrow's point
Had pierced that throbbing breast in twain ;
It was not that he missed his prey,
Or strove to reach the heights in vain ;

It was not that his eye was dimmed,
Nor that his speed must yield to rest ;—
He only missed from off the crag
One high and solitary nest.

A WONDER.

I WONDER, when the flying bird
Shook his glad wings, and paused for rest,
And all the air around was stirred
By sweetest music ever heard,—
I wonder if a distant nest,
Its plaited straws entwined with care,
Seemed for an instant present there !

I wonder, when he flew away,
If ever, on another tree,
He thrilled the golden summer-day
With notes from Paradise astray !
I wonder if alone to me
He came through cloudy miles of sky,
A message couched in minstrelsy.

THE BROKEN FRIENDSHIP.

IT was so beautiful, while it lasted !
If ever were friends, they were we two !
But, like a home that the storm has blasted,
The love was shaken that had been true.

He heard a rumor that went a-flying,
Only a story that some one told;
And his face grew pinched as he were dying,
And two lives dropped from their heaven of gold,

For we tore our long-joined selves asunder,
Hope and memory, fact and thought;
And we lost the rapture, peace, and wonder,
The painful pleasure the union wrought.

The exquisite dream, that had yet seemed real,
The tearful smile and the smiling tear,
The love that had sheltered a pure ideal,
Gave place to a void both dark and drear.

Yet it was beautiful while it lasted!
We loved so dearly, we loved so true!
And now that the friendship long is blasted,
We still have a kindred chord, we too.

CONVENT LACE.

SHE sits within her lonely cell,
From all she loves apart;
The sunshine floods her narrow pane,
But shadows cloud her heart.

Outside the barred and heavy gate
The great world's din is heard—
The wagon's creak, the horse's tread,
The driver's cheery word.

The interests of an active life,
'T is hers no more to heed ;
Her part to wear the nun's straight dress,
And tell the holy bead.

The shuttle flies within her hand,
The thread winds in and out ;
The bobbins yield their treasures up—
She works in mood devout.

Like frost upon the window pane,
When winter's breath is white,
The lace, with tracings delicate,
Glows in the golden light.

As fashioned from the moon's pale beam,
Too frail for human skill,
'T will yet outlast the longest life
That shrines an iron will.

Yet, O pale nun ! the thoughts that burn,
And wake the sleeping heart—
The tender word, the merry laugh—
In these you have no part.

By you no manly strength is roused,
To action brave and true ;
No little child upon your breast,
Has kindled hope anew.

While other women with their love
Have saved an erring one,—
While they have built a home, and blessed
A father, husband, son,—

While, breaking holy bread, their lives
  Have proved one sacrament,
You leave behind this bit of lace,
  Your only monument.

GORNER GRATT.

GOD'S finger drew a solemn line of snow
  Around thy high horizon, lofty peak!
The crimson evening glory quivers low,
  Fades, kindles, dies: the stars come out to seek
Respondent lights, that gleam along the ice
Bereft of warmth,—a glow in chrysalis.

In that green valley nestled at thy feet
  A hundred happy homes have lit their fires;
The weary find their evening rest is sweet,
  Who own no hope that loftier aspires.
But thy last gleam rolls not upon their sight—
Peace in the valley,—glory on the height!

A STORY.

YOU have known the frog that went a-wooing,
  And the spotted doves, whose tender cooing
  Lulled the two children in the wood:
You have slyly peeped, with eyes of wonder,
In the wicker basket, swinging under
  The arm of wee Red Riding Hood:

It was you, no doubt, and not another,
Who stood by the fairy old Godmother,
When Cinderella wept that night ;
And I think you knew—what girl knows better !—
The hopes and wishes that beset her
For unknown splendor and delight.

You have sought along the thorny hedges
When the Prince broke through their crowded edges,
And woke the Beauty from her sleep :
Your sweet, red lips are brimming over
With childish lore, like tubes of clover
That nod where grass grows green and deep.

Yet I must tell a new, long story
Of brave old knights, and battles gory,
That you have never heard before !
You lay in mine your fingers slender,
And look at me with eyes so tender
I cannot think of stories more.

I can only think, "I love you, Baby !"
'T is an old tale ; but, sometime, may be
It will seem strange and sweet to you.
For sometimes even an old, old story,
Told by new lips, seems touched with glory,
The dearer that it is so true.

HOMESPUN.

OF homespun is the modest gown,
Wherein my Love goes clad ;
And yet her regal eyes shine down,
As if their splendid deeps of brown
From under pressure of a crown
Were making my heart glad.

And wooden are the little shoon,
That hold her slender feet ;
But, when the heart of leafy June
Is shaken by a merry tune,
How light she trips beneath the moon,
With smiles how warm, how sweet !

No glove is drawn upon the hand
I dearly love to hold :
But when upon the silver sand
The sunset hurls its burning brand,
I kiss her fingers, where we stand
Full in the cloven gold.

What marvel if I love her true,
My little peasant lass !
The very air the sun shines through
Distils for her a special dew,
And harebells fringe, with sudden blue,
Her footprints in the grass.

IN THE DARK.

DARK, dark ! I cannot see
One step before me.
Clouds gather threateningly,
Dimming Thy glory.
I cannot understand
What Thou for me hast planned,
But I can feel Thy hand
Leading.

Once on a human heart
I leant securely,
Learned in the simple art
Of loving purely.
If, in this soul of mine,
Grief keeps a hidden shrine,
Measure my love by Thine,
Judging !

Dark, dark ! And yet the wrong
Lies in me only,
That life should seem so long,
And hard, and lonely.
Even in the dark, a prayer
Reaches Thy listening ear,
And grief falls off, and care,
Praying.

THE LILY.

THOU art a link from the seen to the unseen,
O sweet, white lily!
The elements of the universe thou siftest
And choosest what thou wilt.
By subtle power thou mouldest them between
Thy shadowy fingers:
Then all thy force in one tall shaft thou liftest,
In silence planned and built.

A golden glory nestles in thy heart,
O sparkling lily!
A thousand snows condensed thy flower outshineth,
Thy self-formed monument.
From out the caldron of thy root, apart
By night distilling,
Hour after hour, thine upward growth refineth
Thine own delicious scent.

A message God has sent to me in thee,
O fragrant lily!
If from the earth's black depths thou pure arisest,
By some plant-instinct wise,
Then shall I doubt an equal power in me
For rising higher?
Rooted in darkness, thou, O soul! sufficest
For bloom in Paradise.

THE OCKLAWAHA RIVER.

'TWIXT marshy banks on either side,
With watery threads extending wide,
The river winds along her way,—
Her sombre darkness wreathed with spray.

A river! 'T is a sentient thing!
A fitful pulse, the eddying
Throbs in and out, with feeble force,
Along the current's steady course.

The sun shines down his calm good-day,
The river sparkles 'mid her gray.
'T is a soul that answers back a soul,
One look interpreting the whole.

Majestic palms along the shore
Repeat their grandeur, o'er and o'er:
The tall white cypress trees are crowned
With mistletoe from fairy ground.

The blushing maples' vivid red
Flames in the branches overhead:—
What heeds the little river how
The birds sing on yon jutting bough?

What heeds she that the holly, kissed
Into deep blushes, in the mist
Of soft, gray moss has veiled her face,
Clinging in intertwined embrace?—

Her only care, to find, at last,
A resting-place, her course all past,
And pour her fluent beauty down,
A perfect gem in St. John's crown.

DEAD HANDS.

DEAR hands, so long from service weary,
So swift in duty, howe'er dreary,
So prone to right, so slow to wrong,
To-night I hold thee fast and long,
Yet cannot wake the will in thee
To render kindness unto me.

Dear hands, so skilled in household ways,
So kind in smoothing gloomy days
Into a sunny happiness!
Oh, without thee to aid and bless,
How shall I lead the path aright
That winds to thee, from out the night?

But yesterday I held thee close.
I could not dream this tide of woes
Would plunge me deep into despair
More gloomy than thy peace is fair!
To-day these tender hands have found
The way to give my heart a wound.

No more, no more, these hands of thine
Shall quiver to a touch of mine!
No more shall open wide the door
That seals my spirit-sepulchre!
Alas! wave beaten on life's sands,
I only hold these poor, dead hands.

MAY THIRTIETH.

BURIED in the narrow grave,
Friend and foe are laid together :
Slender grasses nod and wave,
Blowing in the warm spring weather.
Let them rest ! Let them rest !
With their brave hands on the breast.
In these graves below the sod
Waiting God.

Cheek to cheek, and heart to heart,
So the bitter strife was ended.
Who shall wrench the thoughts apart
Where their memories are blended ?

They have kept the peace for years,
Under snow, and under clover.
We bring only flowers and tears
To the free the grass grows over.

A NIGHT-SONG AT SEA.

WE lie at rest,
O God, upon Thy sea !
The tides that come and go
Are heavings of Thy breast :
Thy great heart beats below,
And what have we to fear ?
We know that Thou art near,
And trust our all to Thee.

We sleep secure!
Nothing Thy care can move,
Nothing can shake our faith.
Thy watchfulness is sure,
And, if Thou send us death,
Still, in Thy mighty sea,
Our hearts shall lean on Thee,
Pillowed upon Thy love.

AWAY FROM HOME.

THE grand old organ sounded
In the proud cathedral to-day:
Then swung the cloudy censer,
And the people knelt to pray.
But I thought of a quiet city
Across the shining sea,
And my prayer went over the distance,
O mother, to home and thee.

O mother, mother, mother!
There 's not a saint on the wall,
In the niche not a Holy Mary,
But thine image blurs it all.
For I think of the gloomy forest,
And the old home at its rim,
And the dear ones around the fireside,
Till my eyes with tears are dim.

Oft in the quiet night-time,
When my eyes are closed in sleep,

There comes to me a vision,
And then my content is deep.
I see the little island
Where the sturdy oak-trees stand,
And the river, red with sunset,
Set between dark curves of land.

I see the shady garden,
I hear the sweet bird-trill ;
The ripening grapes hang clustered
Down on the terraced hill :
We children play in the clover
Abloom in the summer sun,
And mother sews at the window,—
And I wake,—the dream is done.

O mother, the dream is over,
And only the night remains !
The children are no more children,
And life brings sorrows and pains.
The sun sets red on the river,
And the trees their old guard keep,—
But one lies under the clover
In rest that is long and deep.

And yet, although months divide us,
And to-day we are leagues apart,
There is one thing closely joins us,
And that is a loving heart.
'T is a loving heart has written
To bridge the wide, deep sea,
And send a page of remembrance,
O mother, to home and thee.

LULLABY.

LULLABY ! shut your eyes !
If an evil spirit
Sweep up from the shaken earth,
Do not think to fear it !
What can do the baby harm,
Held so fast in mother's arm ?

Lullaby ! lullaby !
If an angel, singing,
Fly down from the holy choirs,
Life immortal bringing,
Mother's arm must yield, 't is true,
But her love will go with you !

THE STATUE.

A PAIR of pleading, childish eyes ;
A little outstretched hand ;
A soft, straight length of loosened hair ;
Two bare feet in the sand :—
The sculptor passed her by,—and yet
That vision he could not forget.

He stood before the uncut stone,
A dream absorbed his thought ;
The hand that held the chisel moved.
Unknowing what it wrought ;

And as he cut the stone away,
Down streamed the golden light of day.

A pair of pleading, childish eyes ;
  A little outstretched hand ;
A soft, straight length of loosened hair ;
  Two bare feet in the sand ; —
She begs forever there in stone,
Like that fair land she calls her own.

You almost see a marble tear
  Roll o'er the round cheek down.
The bosom seems to rise and fall
  Beneath the sculptured gown.
Almost she breathes—there need but be
One touch to give vitality.

One touch—but that he cannot add :
  Not all the sculptor's skill
Can lodge within that perfect head
  One spark of human will.
Here lie the bounds that must confine :
One step more, and it were divine.

BEAUTIFUL EYES.

BEAUTIFUL eyes ! O beautiful eyes,
  Lit from the fires of Paradise !
Bright with the light of girlhood's morn,
Strong with the knowledge of power new-born,
Softer and dearer they grow to me,
Those two deep wells of eternity.

I see, in their depths, a struggle past,
And Peace on her quiet throne, at last;
And Hope looks from the shining door,
Where Grief and Anger sat before:
I see the careful Self-Control,
Brave guardian of a conquered soul.

I 've watched those eyes when all was bright,
And seen them filled with love's soft light:
I 've marked them when the tear-drops fell;—
But never have I loved so well
As now, when, from the mortal strife,
Shines out a saved, but wounded life.

THE BOY'S CONFESSION.

O MOTHER, did you ever see
A caged bird that was just set free?
And did you see him stretch each wing,
And mount toward heaven, and gayly sing,
And sing, and mount, till heaven was won,
Greeting once more the well-known sun?
You never saw it? But you know
How the warm life must bound and glow
Beneath the breast of speckled down!
To-day I saw a tiny, brown,
Pulsating thing, that shook and thrilled,
And could not be a moment stilled.
It turned its little, frightened eyes
From side to side, in such surprise

And terror! If I could forget!
But that look haunts my being yet.

O mother, I will tell you all!
It fluttered down upon our wall,
And was so pretty, and it sang
Until the whole great garden rang.
I knew it would be very wrong
To rob its nest of that sweet song,
But still I wanted it so! Well,
I threw a stone and then it fell.
'T was only wounded in the wing,
But it had ceased to thrill and sing,
And looked as if it were in pain,
And tried to fly—and sank again.
Within my hand the bird grew cold,
And so the story all is told.
For all the tears that have been shed
Never brought back a thing once dead.

The story all is told, I said,
I only meant the bird is dead.
But I—there burns within my breast
A vision of that empty nest.
I see it ruined, and I know
That but for me it were not so;
I see the sad mate fluttering round,
Call for the bird dead in the ground.
I do not mourn the being blamed—
I did wrong, and I am ashamed.
I cannot sleep! It almost seems
The bird would come to me in dreams.
But I am glad you know the whole,
A weight is rolled off from my soul.

I never *could* have told another !
How good it is to have a mother !

THE BELLS ACROSS THE WATER.

AS sweet as fairy pipes in June,
When every rose is blowing ;
As tender as earth's harmony,
When Nature's heart is glowing :
The bells across the water.

As faint as echoes from the past
That in the heart are swelling ;
As tuneful as the reed, when Pan
His inmost soul was telling :
The bells across the water.

As swift as parting hours before
Our loved ones go forever ;
They tinkle in our memory
Though vanished from the river,
The bells across the water.

THE FIRTH OF CLYDE.

THE Firth of Clyde !
Between its shores the vessels sail,
With long wings waving to the gale.
The little towns are strung along
Like notes that dot a page of song.

The mountains lift their misty heads,
Half-rising from their solid beds,
As on the waters glide.

The Firth of Clyde!
The storm may beat its surging waves,
And hurl the sailors to their graves;
But in my fancy there will be
A picture, fair in memory,
With village huts, with castles gray,
Unknowing increase or decay—
To changeless calm allied.

THE CAMP-FIRE.

WE sat around the fitful light
Our brushwood fire sent high;
The brands peered far into the night
With red and restless eye.

The thick cross-stick of charring wood
Our gypsy kettle bent;
Close by, white in the bushes, stood,
Half-lit, the nearest tent.

One silent fisherman far out,
Leaned from his silent boat;
In silvery waters leapt a trout;
We heard one last bird-note.

Through lashes made of trailing clouds
  One quiet moon looked down ;
Where ripples tossed their arms in crowds
  There shone a fainter one.

No softer hummed the ancient bees,
  On sweet Hymettus' brim,
Than, through the stirring boughs, the breeze
  Low-breathed his vesper-hymn.

The firelight plucked at each still face
  With long and eager hands,
While shadows hurried through the place
  And met in restless bands.

Of fires built on the hill we spoke
  Where Persian sunlight streams,
Where kneel the simple Eastern folk
  To worship those bright gleams.

We told full many an olden tale,
  And many a laugh went round,
Till Echo held in her deep dale
  A carnival of sound.

And other words were whispered low :
  But, and thou wilt know more,
Go, ask it of the reeds that grow
  On that calm river-shore !

SABBATH SONGS.

SWEET Sabbath songs of days gone by,
Ye fill mine eyes to-night with tears,—
Like incense on some altar laid,
Whose odor steals from other years.

Not sacred songs alone were wont
To send to heaven their tuneful lay,
But those that steal into the soul
And melt the coarser self away.

Dear "Annie Laurie" ran along:
"Across the far, blue hills, Marie!"—
"I cannot sing the old songs," too,
And then, "We 'd better bide a wee."

"Nearer, my God, to thee!" we sang.
God sent his angel down to hear,
And, from our happy household band,
He drew one, ever to be near.

Gone now for aye, sweet Sabbath songs!
In all the world none sound for me:
Yet, echoing in mine inmost heart
Rings music struck by memory.

Forever gone from out my life:
Yet, not all lost to noble use,
Ye lift me to my higher self,
And all my bonds of being loose.

THE SKELETON IN THE DUNGEON.

AT ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA.

FOUR heavy walls, a low, stone roof
That with eternal moisture drips ;
A tiny corner kept aloof,
Where fungus from the gray rock sips :—
What hands have hewn this nook, for sin
To hide some dreaded secret in ?

Oh, worse than Chillon's storied cell
'Neath calm Lake Leman's swelling breast,
Where dim gray light in baptism fell,
And broke the eye's unwelcome rest ;
No glimmer here the shadows woke,
No sound the awful silence broke.

Imprisoned here when life was young,
To wail for Death's delivering hand :
While every nerve with health was strung,
And golden ran each minute's sand :
All hope of rescue cut away,
A living corpse they shut from day.

But, Essence delicate and strange !
Free soul that cannot be confined !
Beyond the heavens' utmost range
By God's own finger scrolled and lined,
Thou smilest, where forgiveness is,
On this, thy worn-out chrysalis.

THE STORM OVER.

A THOUSAND Marguerites opened their eyes,
This morning out in the meadow,
Where the golden wings of the butterflies
Tremble through sun and shadow.
The brown lark rose from her grass-hid nest,
Where the wild night through, she had found
safe rest.

The sweet wild violets shook their heads,
Each in its light blue bonnet:
The bees that swarmed round the garden beds
Hummed still their olden sonnet:—
But the oak, that fell with the lightning stroke,
Lies on its face where its brave heart broke.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING.

IF ever skies are faintly blue,
And stars look down with golden eyes,
And wide, thin veils of cloud hang down,
Blown out through chinks from Paradise;
When all the solemn woods are thrilled
With songs that drift and float away,
And every plant sings out in buds
Be sure it is the month of May.

Sweet May brings flowers with lavish hands
To scatter on the springing grass :
The peasant girls in mended gowns
May stoop and pluck them, as they pass.
And May brings thoughts of Long Ago,
With hopes to soothe the bitter heart ;
And, best and tenderest of all,
The Golden Wedding stands apart.

O wedding-day of years gone by !
O holy words, and spoken prayer,
And blushes sweet as apple-blooms
That shape their pink stars through the air !
If Heaven is shut to longing souls,
Yet sometimes Eden opens wide :
And angels smile out through the eyes
That light the fair face of a bride.

The years sped by, as years must speed,
And children's fingers, soft and warm,
Were laid upon the mother's lips,
And held the father's steady arm.
The baby-voices died away,
Yet vibrate in the ends of space :
The parents' eyes still trace with love
The child-looks in the grown-up face.

'T is fifty years ! The children went
To new homes dearer than the old :
The tale of life is long and sweet,
But still the story soon is told.
As men and women in the world
They mix with life, they work, and roam :—

And some God took, with loving arms
To hold them till the parents come.

'T is fifty years ! The hair is white
That frames the temples worn with care,
'T is fifty years ! The feeble step
No longer now is light as air.
Not old ! With seventy years behind
And God's eternity before !
Not old ! Yet stepping toward the boat
That nears so fast a distant shore.

They are not old ! Their eyes have gained
A look of Heaven that is so near.
Young hearts may beat in aged breasts
To melodies we cannot hear.
To-day, for daughter, son, and friend,
The smile of love is clear and bright,
And we rejoice to hear the words,
" My children all, come home to-night ! "

The way is long to those far homes,
But still they come, from South and West,
To press the withered cheek once more,
And rest upon a mother's breast.
If you should hear a sound of wings,
And almost see—you know not what !—
Parents of angels ! Could you think
Your Golden Wedding was forgot ?

It may be that the time is short
Before a Father's voice shall call,

It may be that another year
  Will drop the message sure to all.
What then! From age to endless youth,
  From shadowy paths to perfect light
They go, and seek His waiting arms
  Who soon will say, "Come home to-night!"

THE CHILD I NEVER HAD.

A BABY with rings of dusky hair,
  And beautiful eyes of deepest brown,
With doubled pink fists, and dimpled arms,
A comfort, a trouble, a joy, a care,—
Now sleeping soft in its trailing gown,
Now crying over its own alarms,
Or cooing low that its heart is glad,—
This is the child that I never had.

When low in the crimson the pale sun lies,
My wicker chair in its place I set,
I look out over the dreamy skies,
And suddenly feel that my eyes grow wet.
I long to press on my lonely breast
A wee, sweet face that was never mine,
As I watch the glow creep out of the west
And die on the dim horizon-line.

O happy mother, with fretted life,
And hands that hurry in endless tasks,
Barred in by the holy vow of wife
That gives all freely, and nothing asks.

When the work is hard, and the rest is brief,
When the fingers ache, and the heart is sad,
And scalding tears give a short relief,
Think once of the child that I never had.

By the little cradle that, to and fro,
Rocks gently, timed with your tender song:
By the baby-clothes that you sit and sew,
Think not that your story is dull and long.
Remember only, the mother-heart
In some has never a child to own,
And love and liberty dwell apart,
Since rest from labor means life alone.

THE SLAVE-MARKET AT ST. AUGUSTINE.

SEVEN massive pillars on a side
Hewn from coquina, rough and gray,
Uphold a strong and lofty roof
That glimmers in the light of day.
The pavement shows no time-worn break,
No crumbling dust portends decay.

This is the spot where, as the morn
Hung coyly out her red and gold,
And the soft scroll of earth and sky
From cloudy darkness was unrolled,
A group of negroes, huddled close,
Sleepless, were waiting to be sold.

From home and friends forever torn,
What anguish pierced each anxious heart.

Whom God had joined in marriage-bonds
Almighty Gold had power to part.
What Christ had bought with flowing blood
Men bartered at the unhallowed mart.

Yet all is past ! And round about
The old slave-market beauty smiles.
The great salt bay its arms extends
In blessing over sunken miles,
And, folded on its heaving breast,
Sparkle and glisten fairy isles.

The rude old columns upright stand :
Yet no mark on the place is set !
And on the roof the dews of heaven
Glitter when morning grass is wet.
While, o'er the base, an ivy flings
Its green and ever-flickering net.

YE CROONING WAVES.

YE crooning waves that weep forever,
  Lapped on the broad, blue ocean,
No power your tossing plain shall sever
  From infinite commotion.
Ye roll in dull, eternal sorrow,
  With strength and blessing mingled,
Unaltered still, as each to-morrow
  From God's unknown is singled.

Ye weep the dead that sleep forgotten,
  Ye seized in stormy weather :

Ye mourn the stout beam, now grown rotten,
That held the ship together.
The light that fell in golden dashes
Through dim, translucent distance,
To myriad rainbow sparks and flashes
Is shattered by your mist-lance.

With feet that hesitate and tremble
Ye touch each country shyly :
Ye see the seeming-true dissemble,
The simple planning slyly.
Ye grieve ; ye cannot see the ending
Of all earth's pain and anger.
Your soft, monotonous voice is sending
A moan from out its languor.

GROWING OLD.

I CANNOT bear to think of growing old :
To feel the hand, at morn and evening laid
In tender benison upon my head,
Falter and fail, as strength declining wanes,
And time draws out the current from its veins
To leave it withered, motionless, and cold.

I am afraid to think of growing old !
There is a voice that daily in my ear
Has uttered praise, the sweetest I can hear.
It leads me by a chord from soul to soul.
How can I bear, as future years shall roll,
To find that voice the last dear word has told !

How often have I felt a joyous thrill
Steal over me at thought of being young !
A sudden song has moved upon my tongue,
My feet have danced to music never heard,
My whole glad being carolled, like a bird
Whose brief life has no grief its voice to still.

My foot the verdant heather-moor has pressed
And left the bells unshaken in its wake :
My boat has skimmed the tiny mountain lake,—
But touched no fountain in them all, in sooth,
That brings its finder an eternal youth,
And seals the long unquiet of the breast.

Oh, that some charm the wisest could unfold,
Whatever painful penance might attend,
That to the hungry wish could magic lend
To keep the midnight darkness on the hair,
And, for the eyes, forever prison there
The soul that will decline on growing old !

THE DIFFERENCE.

I HAVE seen eyes that were more tender !
I know not why I cannot brook
One gentle, half-indifferent look
That flashes on me, thrilled with splendor.

I have heard voices that were sweeter !
Why does my spirit spread its wings
And fly to meet her, as she sings ?
Why is my life a thing completer ?

I felt no lack before I met her.
But if some dread power should remove
This one fair woman whom I love—
Break then, O Heart, thine earthly fetter.

DONALD.

BY a trick of falling eyelids,
And a gracious gift of speech,
By a smile that trembles faintly
Just within the dimples' reach,
By a practised look of wonder
Shining in her false, blue eyes,
She has won my bonny Donald,
And my life in ruin lies.

I—I only stood before him
With a love so warm and true,
That I never thought of blushing,
As I looked him through and through.
What the need of drooping lashes
When I only thought of *him*.—
And I had not learned the cunning
That should blur her beauty dim.

Donald, Donald, dear, if erring,
Strong of heart, but weak in love!
Sometime will her smile be wanting,
Just as stars fall from above.
May the great God pour down blessings
Till they fill your wandering heart!
Yet I fear, lad, in your future,
Sorrow, too, may have its part!

MY SONG.

I SANG a song.
I was but a child crouching down in the clover,
And looking for fairy-horns hid in the moss.
A heartful of joy from my young lips ran over,
A bliss of completeness unshadowed by loss.
I dreamed of a hundred faint silver bells, ringing
'Mid the flowers which their delicate odors were flinging,
And of wind-shaken reeds that were tangled together
Along the soft rims of a wide moor of heather.
My heart sang the song : my lips only expressed it.
My joy had been less, if I must have suppressed it.
So I sang.

Sing the song now ?
But the clover all fell by the hand of the mower,
And the elfin-bells long since have rung their last chime,
And the wild-flower that blooms bows its head so much lower
That it hides from my eyes that intangible rhyme.
No more the reeds tremble that border the heather,
Nor sway at the breath of the chill autumn weather.
The song all has fled that I sang happy-hearted :
Its charm of unconsciousness all has departed.
Yet I cannot forget that, in innocent dreaming,
Once I lived from my heart, without caring for seeming,
And so, sang.

IN THE COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.

THE air was filled with sounds of bells
That drifted down like flakes of snow;
Long rays of light shook to and fro,
As if by trembling angels blown
Whose pure eyes gazed upon God's throne,
Where endless glory dwells.

From every pillar's shadowy side
A saint cast down his quiet eyes,
A spirit fixed in marble guise.
A mystery of holiness
Brooded upon the sacred place,
With wings extended wide.

As in some forest's leafy gloom,
Whose arching trees meet overhead,
Shut out the tender evening red,
Shut in the million songs of birds,
The love expressed, but not through words,
Stole through the vaulted room.

The gray-haired priest has done his prayer;
The swelling echoes die away;—
Yet something lives to mark the day!
That solemn grandeur, unforgot,
Sweeps through the soul where peace is not,
And leaves its image there.

PRESIDENT GARFIELD—DEAD.

MOURN, mourn for the great heart stilled ;
Mourn for the life that was in its prime,
For the narrow grave too early filled,
Undug by the careless hand of time.
Let tears fall fast on the quiet bed
Where lies at rest—a nation's dead !

Mourn for the life now offered up
That broken laws might be made whole ;
Grieve for that last long sorrow-cup
Whose bitter drops have freed his soul :
Prove that it was not all in vain
That wasted form was racked by pain.

Mourn for the Christless party-hate,
That thrilled to deed a coward hand ;
For the Real small, and the Ideal great,
That breed corruption in our land!
Mourn ! we do not mourn alone,
All nations share our anguished moan.

Out from the highest Paradise
In that blue heaven above us spead,
A spirit looks with watching eyes,
A martyr's crown upon his head.
Mourn for the wrong that he must see
With that glance of immortality.

THE MATTERHORN.

THOU grand, triangular peak !
On thy proud head the heavy sky is propped,
And, like a vail, the floating mist is dropped
That hangs its banner from thy fortress bleak.
The whistling wind creeps round thy sides in vain,
The soft snow cannot find a resting-place ;
Thy face o'erlooks the vast and sunless space,
Unfurrowed by the fall of snow and rain.

No human foot shall dare
With rash impunity to scale thy height ;
The trembling limb and horror-swimming sight
Attend the passage through thy rarer air.
The rumbling avalanche pours ruin down,
And hurls the wanderer to his lower sphere.
The ringing echoes drop his last groan clear,
Chasms the sound in awful silence drown.

What power is then in Him
Who raised thee from the level-lying land
With one uplifting of his mighty hand !
Who grouped about thy distance-purpled rim
The thousand tints that warm a sunset sky ;
Below them heaped the century-frozen ice ;
Gave isolation as thy grandeur's price,
And set thee guard upon eternity.

HOW THE BROOK CAME DOWN.

WITH icicle-fringe from the frost fairy's hand
Edging the desolate, hard-frozen land,
There rippled a brook from under the snow,
Up where the pink Alpine roses all blow.

From the cold speeding, she ran down a hill ;
Low on its base stood a half-ruined mill ;
Above it, a cottage was flooded with song :
The brook flashed responsive, and hurried along.

Bordered by heather, and bordered by broom,
Yellow with threads from the sun's busy loom ;
Here with a flourish, and there with a nod,
Here edged with jagged rocks, there over sod ;

Here through the meadows, where sweet violets
grow,
Bending to see their reflection below ;
Here with her silver hair caught on a stone,
There for a wounded wave making her moan ;

Here with a ripple, and there with a flower
Whirling to death in its first rosy hour ;
Now, when the Day-God's swift arrows were bright,
Now, through the silent hours solemn with night;—

So went the widening brook, in her course
Dashing her waters with greatening force.

Far in her wake shone the wee, glinted pearls
Lavishly scattered in swift-twisted whirls.

Here o'er the trunk of a down-fallen tree,
Laid in her path to the low-growling sea,
Foaming and dashing she springs on her way,
Limpid with moonshine and brilliant with day.

Now to the unbounded sea she has pressed,
Lies like a throbbing vein traced on his breast ;
And in mid-ocean, high up on the mast,
Listening, the sailor-boy thinks of his past ;

Dreams of his home where the brook flows along,
Hears once again a long-quieted song ;
Tears to the past dim, a moment, his eye,
Then fall in the wave—but he cannot tell why !

SINCE I HAVE KNOWN YOU.

SINCE I have known you, life has been
Sweet beyond all imaginings,—
Not wholly free from care and pain,
Or the sad trail of broken wings ;—
Nor have I, like a cradled child,
Seen naught beyond my safe retreat,
Nor can the voice of love call out
The ready violet at my feet.
Still Labor claims me as his own :
Love can but lend to common things
The glory of a heart at peace,—
Sweet beyond all imaginings.

THE "ANGEL'S MEADOW."

I KNOW a spot where heaven drops down,
From cloudy hands, rich tints of brown,
That fall where, dim before our eyes,
Afar the ruined castle lies.
Below, like crystal dipped in fire,
On feet that speed, but never tire,
The Neckar runs between her shores,
Furrowed by trailing tracks of oars.

I know a spring, whose coolness drips
Like breath, from rough red-sandstone lips.
There moss holds out its wee, green cup,
And feathery grass springs nodding up.
The foxglove shakes her purple bells
That tinkle through the wind-swept dells,
And bees hum music for the ear
That holds small insect-voices dear.

I know a field where daisies close
Their steadfast eyes, in long, white rows.
Along the edge, high stalks of grain
Send flute-like notes in faint refrain ;
And, interwoven here and there,
Like some rich pattern wrought with care,
All wrapt in mystic blossom-trance,
Corn-flowers and poppies dart and dance.

Forget-me-nots, that blossom low
And star the meadow where they grow,

With faces hidden from the light
Come first before my mental sight.
It seems as if eternal May
Had lent that field one perfect day,—
One, only one ! and formed this flower
To say, " Do not forget this hour ! "

THE STORK'S NEST.

A WHOLE wide villageful of homes
Lies close within the hill's brown hand :
The shadows strike the quaint, red roofs,
And fall upon the wooded land.
Just where the last dim sunbeams drop
Upon our ancient chimney-top,
The stork, in meditative rest,
Serene, stands on her twig-built nest.

And shall I tell you what I think ?
A thought is an unbidden guest,
That comes when we expect him least,
And draws the bolts that close the breast.—
I think the stork flew all about
To seek earth's cosiest corner out ;
Saw how our cottage-fire shone,
And perched her home above our own

THE LITTLE GERMAN GIRL.

WHAT does she think of, as she goes
Sedately down the narrow street,
Her either cheek a dainty rose,
Her baby-mouth demure and sweet?
Beneath the silken lashes dance,
With childish hope, the big blue eyes,
Yet gravity is in her glance,
And questionings of shy surprise.

I 'd like her painted, as she stands
A moment still, in mended gown,
The knitting growing in her hands
That are so little and so brown.
I 'd like to keep that honest face
Forever shut within my power,
To cheer me with its modest grace,
And wile away some listless hour.

What does she think of? In her dreams
Is she a queen in bright array!
Methinks a look of splendor seems
To dawn into the sinking day!—
Or does she fancy that a knight
Comes leaping from his fiery steed,
To strike for her with loving might,
And win her through his worthy deed!

Believe me, little German girl,
There 's many a lady fair to view,
With pale, proud face, and drooping curl,
Would give her all to be like you.

There 's not a queen upon her throne,
Whose power extends to life and death,
Can count that happiness her own
Which you inhale with every breath.

So count your stitches, little friend,
And make your knitting-work complete.
May Holy Care your path attend,
Even if it be a village street!
Though none would paint you, as you stood
Here in my sight, a moment's time,
Yet I have done the best I could,
And painted you all out—in rhyme.

THE FISHER-BOY.

A CALM sea in the morning red,
A fisher-boy upon the shore;
A white sail for the soft breeze spread,
A shout that joined the billows' roar,
A "Good-by, mother!" gayly said.

And the mother shaded her eyes with her hand,
And looked at the boat as it danced from land.

A wild sea in the evening red,
A fisher-boy far off from shore,
A tangled sail to rough winds spread,
A deep voice in the breaker's roar:
A "Good-by, mother," faintly said.

And the mother shaded her eyes with her hand,
And prayed for the boat that should never land.

GOOD-BY, HEIDELBERG.

HOW strange it is that love will cling,
Like ivy, to a ruined thing,
And make more charming in its fall
This sunken arch of crumbling wall,
This broken pillar's curving grace,
Than when they first grew into place!
How strange it is that you and I,
Born far beneath a western sky,
Have wandered, led by fortune, here,
And count this spot so dear, so dear!

And yet, in truth, both you and I
Are glad to breathe our last "Good-by."
We have been happy here to roam,
But far across the sea is *Home.*
We, tearless, meet the warm hand-clasp
Of friends who weep to give the grasp.
How strange it is, that, more than all
Our human fellowship, this wall,
This fallen landmark of the past,
Wrings sorrow from our hearts at last!

Not those skilled hands that once long wrought,
Have made it sacred to our thought;
Not those brave knights and ladies fair
Who lived, and loved, and perished there.
For us it is a casket, dim,
But filled with memories to the brim.

Our dreams have pierced this shattered wall
And here are fixed beyond recall.
We are not loath to say "Good-by,"
Yet we leave something, you and I.

SHE SINGS.

SHE sings! I do not know the words
That shake the summer air:
And yet that joyous flood of notes
Seems present everywhere.

What are the words? She carols on
As free as bird in June:
Her life is boundless as the air,
Her very breath a tune.

I know not if she ever lived
Until I strolled along,
Nor if her being dies away
With that exultant song,—

But this I know! The summer day
Had lost one golden gleam,
If that rich voice had failed to lend
Its meaning to the dream.

THE HOPES OF LONG AGO.

IT is so long, so long ago,
That I almost forget how long,
And then it seemeth very near!
The sun scarce shone, he was so low,
The thin air trembled with a song
That from the heart struck on the ear.

Oh, golden sunset that has fled!
Oh, quiet lake, that, at our feet,
Lay smooth and waveless as the sky!
What cry can bring again the dead,
The once lived hours that were so sweet,
The moments that are gone for aye!

And we were sitting on the shore,
And words were said—I know not what.
But, over land and over sea,
Although that time can come no more,
Although its fancied joys are not,
Those half-said thoughts have followed me.

How sad it is, at forty years,
When wrinkles lie upon the face,
And gray hairs peep amid the brown,
To weep again the bitter tears
That stole our youth's first subtle grace,
When our first god went crashing down!

We do not mourn the offered heart,
We do not grieve for vanished love!
But sometimes, in the hours of rest,

We mourn that we have learned the art
To hide the thoughts that in us move,
Within the recess of the breast.

But, as the autumn sometimes brings
A few warm days amid her frost,
When earth spreads out her fairest page,
When every little songster sings,
And Nature holds her Pentecost—
So with the autumn of our age.

And as we feel the pleasant glow,
A lost sense comes to us again,
Again life seems a noble thing.
Oh, golden hopes of Long Ago,
Freed from accompanying pain,
Ourselves unto ourselves ye bring.

A YEAR'S HISTORY.

SPRINGTIME: and the sleepy plant
Throws aside its warm snow-cover,
Tosses up its small green head,
That the April sky bends over;
Stretches all its finger-leaves
Out for presents it receives—
Bits of sunshine, drops of rain
Pattering their sweet refrain.

Summer: and the plant grows tall,
Like a slender-waisted maiden,

And the bud upon its breast
  Swells and deepens, color-laden.
Painted wings of butterflies
All about it fall and rise,
Bees hum for it, breezes blow—
All to make its blossoms grow.

Autumn : and the flower lies dead,
  Swaying on the stalk that bore it.
Butterflies go swinging by,
  Bees no longer murmur o'er it.
But the secrets of past days—
Falling dew, and golden rays—
Changed to fragrance, twinge and dart
From its never-dying heart.

Winter : and the leaves are brown,
  And the bitter wind comes sweeping,—
"It is time you went to bed,
  Since the other plants are sleeping!"
So he tucks it snugly in
With snow-blankets to the chin :
And it hears a whispering,—
"Sleep! there comes another spring!"

LEAVING THE BODY.

RISE, Spirit, rise,
  Up to thy late-left realms of day!
Take from the fringed nooks of the eyes
The expression I have learned to prize.

Draw from the azure veins
Life, with its pangs and pains,
And speed away.

Make whiter still
The awful whiteness of that brow :
Bend, and the quiet chamber fill
With that calm rest that knows no will ;
And gather to a smile
The breath he breathed erewhile,—
And hasten now.

Yet have no fear !
There is no might that is so strong
Can steal from me thee who art dear.
Incline upon me. Canst thou hear
Clearly the words I say ?
I love *thee*, not thy clay,—
And love is long !

THE WOOD-WIFE.

THE house was little, and brown, and low ;
The moss hung down from the ragged eaves,
And, over the sunken roof, a row
Of shivering poplars shook their leaves.
The sun shone in on the old stone floor,
Where the ancient Roman altar stood,
And the wood-wife sat at the open door
And gazed down the long trail through the wood.

The priest stood near with his open book,
And traced on the page the narrow word,
But the wood-wife turned with an absent look,
And an ear that was tuned unto things unheard.
She thought of the days that were long gone by,
When the axe-man led her, with honest pride,
Through the long trail, under the shining sky,
And kissed at the threshold his rosy bride.

She thought of the children,—low they lie !—
Whose heads had rested upon her breast :
Of sweet child-songs and the baby-cry
That stilled as she lulled them into rest.
They had chosen homes in the busy town,
They had lived, and married,—but all were dead.
Yet the mother's heart still folded down,
In its deepest nook, each little head.

Her life passed, touching her like a dream
That fades and deepens within the brain ;
Long walks that bordered the forest stream,
Long nights shut in by the twists of rain.
The first pale violets of the spring
That raised their eyes when they felt her near ;
The thick, short thoughts that the years may bring
Came, fanned by sorrow, and love, and fear.

" My gods are the sun and the grand old oak ;
And what are your gods to me ? " she said.
Her voice to quavering whispers broke ;
Her face grew set, like a face just dead.
But the cold priest rustled the printed page,
And read the prayers in a hollow tone,

Unheeding the tremulous form of age
That shook, and dropped on the threshold stone.

She thought: "I will die in my own, old faith,
The only faith that my loved ones knew!"
Read on, stern priest! With that struggling breath
A soul that is worn with life breaks through.
Read on! For the wood-wife hears no more.
This moment, into the thin, clear air,
A spirit flew from the old stone floor,
And stretched its wings for its journey—where?

A ROSE-BUD.

I BROUGHT her a rose-bud yesterday.
She took it, and held it to the light,
And smiled with a pathos sweet and slight;
And, smiling, she laid the bud away.

To-day, on the pillow's dented snows
She lies, with the smile still on her lips,
And cold to the folded finger-tips.
To-day, and the bud has bloomed—a rose.

A HOPE FOR LEIGH.

WHAT shall I hope for the little child
Whose days are as yet so few?
Shall I wish for paths that are blossom-sweet,
And skies that are ever blue?

But winter comes, with its piercing cold,
And finds its way to the heart;
While snows fall fast from the darkened sky,
And the old friends stand apart.

But what shall I ask? Wealth? Honor? Fame?
But riches bring no content,
And fame is a mocking wreath, that crowns
The being whose joys are spent;
And honor fades as a rose, whose breath
Is sweet, while the buds unfold.
Oh! what is the wish for the little child
Whose story is all untold?

Smile from your cradle, little child,
Whose life amid smiles began;
My hope for you is a loving heart
That believes in God and in man.
The world is kind to the innocent,
And it will repay your trust;
While love is a plant that cannot die,
But flowers when all is dust.

THE ROSE.

THE painter of the evening sky
Drew long, bright lines across the west;
He veiled the sun's great, gleaming eye
With cloudy mists that half expressed
And half concealed what they would hide;
As, in its distant niche, aside

From eyes that look and then forget,
Some dim saint longs for heaven yet.

Broad bands of purple and of dun,
  Irregularly grouped with skill,
Now glimmered round the dying sun
  And shadowed forth the artist's will.
With faint, soft shades of beauteous pink,
Joined in a long chain, link on link,
He bound the darkening heavens round—
And then—his brush slipped to the ground.

Oh, strange mischance to spirit's power!
  Oh, blessed miracle that sprang
To being in that holy hour!
  Oh, low, sweet, vesper chimes that rang!
The dim sky lost one tender shade,
Although in loveliness arrayed:
But where the artist's pencil fell
A rose nods blushing to the dell.

Day after day, all summer through,
  Though clouds may shroud, or rains may fall,
There rises to enraptured view
  The sweet wild-rose that blooms for all.
The princess pins it in her lace,
The beggar holds it to her face;
And the same Hand its care bestows
On evening sky, and blossoming rose.

OPEN THE WINDOW.

OPEN the window wide, Love, and let me feel
the air,
Warm with the slender beams that quiver every-
where.

Do you remember the old oak tree
That stood with head far in the sky?
It seemed to us steeped in melody
So dense that it almost met the eye.
The lightning clove its sturdy breast:
In tortured shreds the branches hang!
But a bird flew from her fire-wrecked nest,
And, poised above for an instant—sang!

My life is riven so, yet my heart is sweet with song:
I heard them say "No Hope!" and I shall not
linger long.

The dearest thing I take from earth
Is the eager, sweet betrothal kiss,
That taught me all your love's true worth
And swept me with pulsating bliss.
No years could wear it irom my mouth;
It goes through death's dark suffering
As breezes blow from the fragrant south,
And burst the chill air with their wing.

There is no power on earth, and none in the world
to be,
That shall sever our souls—even by taking me.

What tender word can I breathe to-night
To last through the coming parted years!
How can I seal your clouded sight
So that it may not dim with tears!
Lay down your head a moment here:
Look at me with your loving eyes.
I want to feel your presence near
When I begin to immortalize!

A SONG FOR MARGARET.

A SONG for little Margaret!
A happy song for the shining eyes
In which no brooding shadow lies!
O singing birds, that cleave the sky
And dip in music as ye fly,
Think of her face, a mirrored soul;
Her soft, loose hair that frames the whole;
Think of her eyes so innocent,
Two crystal spheres from heaven lent;
The baby-voice, whose daily prayer
Pierces the vast unknown of air;
Her dimpled hands, O mark them well!
And when your wordless raptures swell,
Think of the rock upon whose breast
Is set your warm, deep, laden nest;
Think of the tender twitterings,
The hush of night, the sound of wings,
The crimson flush of evening skies,
The warmth that in the desert lies;
Think of the joy of that swift motion

With which ye cross the cloudy ocean !
All that is loveliest and best,
All that with pleasure fills your breast,
Into one mad joy garner it,
And drop a song for Margaret !

IT IS THE MOON.

IT is the moon, the silver moon,
Sada, dear Sada !
The friends who are so far away,
Whose hands we cannot press to-day,
For them it is but noon.
For them the moon, a small white cloud,
Lies empty, like an unused shroud,
All waiting for the night
To fill its folds with light.

It is the moon, the shining moon,
Sada, dear Sada !
One long beam stretches to the west,
Straight to a mother's longing breast,
Who hopes to meet us soon :
Another gush of light, in showers
Springs out from heaven's heart to ours.
And our bright bond of love,—
See !—There it gleams above !

HE LOVES ME.

HE loves me ! He loves me !
It has been such a weary time !
I never thought my life's hard prose
Could alter so to sudden rhyme.
I almost fear to be so glad ;
Yet what can ever make me sad,
Since he loves me ?

He loves me ! he loves me !
His place is far above my own,
And yet he stoops, from all the world
To single to him me alone.
The day from all days stands apart :
The thought is burned into my heart
That he loves me !

He loves me ! he loves me !
There 's something terrible in joy,
When some slight change may make it less,
Or some quick sorrow quite destroy.
If heaven's grand anthem, ringing clear,
Should need his voice, who is so dear
And who loves me !

He loves me ! he loves me !
I must grow better every day,
Must bend my soul to higher things,
Lest I should wear his love away.
Come, sorrows of a woman's life !
Come, softening pain ! ennobling strife !
For he loves me !

O STAR, SHINE ON!

O STAR, shine on!
The moon is rising in the sky,
And, bending low, the archer nigh
Tips his bright arrow with a sigh,
That, like a wail, goes sobbing by.

O star, shine on!
Just as a silvering water-fall
Splashed along its rocky wall,
So let thy sundrops, keen and small,
Flow through the night's great quiet hall.

O star, shine on!
Thou art no mighty globe for me:
Thou art a spirit, grand and free,
Whose glowing wings have brushed the sea
That circles round eternity.

WHEN IT FADES.

HE stooped to a wayside bush
And culled its fairest flower;
Fastened it on his breast,
And wore it there—an hour.
And then the rose grew pale,
And he threw it into the dust.

Roses are plenty, you know,
And if they must fade, they must.

No thought of the long, still hours
The rose was growing fair!
No sigh for the scented tax
It paid to the tyrant Air!
Why should he trouble so?
It had been sweet in its day,
But when it withered and died,
He could only throw it away.

A hundred roses may smile,
Nodding upon his breast;
But the one he flung away
Has lost its fairest and best.
With gathering fled its bloom:
Its petals are grimed and torn.
And its long night of despair
Never shall roll to morn.

MIZPAH.

OH tender meaning, flashing through
The riven bars that guard our speech,
Like lily-bells swung low with dew,
The heart is heavy that you reach!
We part! Why should I add a word
That can but hint at our regret?
Each happy hope that in us stirred,
As star that dips in cloud, has set.

The weary years will wear away
With blinding snow, with gentle rain,
Yet cannot bring us back To-day,
Nor make us what we were, again.
Our thoughts will compass half a world
And leave behind the sluggard sight,
While, with earth's circling surface whirled,
One dwells in darkness, one in light.

Yet, Mizpah ! Here we raise a heap
That witnesses the love we bear.
We know that One a watch will keep,
And, for the other, each will spare.
The joys that future days will bring
Will make our present sorrow seem
Only a trembling minor string
Across the music of a dream.

THEN AND NOW.

WHEN we parted, what was life ?
'T was a sweet, a sleepless dream :
Two bright paths along a stream,
That should lead to meadows, rife
With the golden-headed grain,—
Happy mowers—loaded wain—
Where we two, all partings past,
Should united reap, at last.

Now we meet,—and life is what ?
'T is a dream,—a broken glass

Where the gloomy shadows pass
Of that glory which is not.
In the rain and in the wold,
Fearing for the winter's cold,
Empty-handed we have met
Where our early hopes were set.

HIS MONUMENT.

WHERE shall we build his monument
Whose life in our behalf was spent?

There is an island wondrous fair,
Hid in the sea's deep breast;
The rarest flowers shed fragrance there—
Oh, shall he there find rest?
How sweet the wild-bird's untaught song
Floats those free-curving slopes along!
A silver splash, with scarlet tip,
Darts where the crystal waters dip.
Say, shall we rear with careful hand
A costly pile in that far land?
No, for no tender eyes would weep,
In that bright land, his quiet sleep.

There is a little inner world
Locked in each human heart,
And there, in miniature, lies furled
Life's glowing counterpart.
How pure within that sacred shrine
Flames the soft light of life divine!

The hopes that thrill the eager soul,
Like waves, in quick succession roll.
From all love's noblest offerings blent,
Here we will frame his monument;
For, in the sad heart, history
Writes records that can never die.

THE SPIRIT OF THE ALPS.

HE climbs the cliff with steady nerve,
His step is sure and slow;
Below him yawns the precipice,
Above gleam peaks of snow.
Upon the jutting granite crag
Are fixed his eager eyes,
Where, just beyond his straining grasp,
Fair blooms the edelweiss.

One last, hard step, and it is won!
It rests within his hand.
Its roots still quiver with the shock
That rent them from the sand.
Now what remains but to return
The weary way he came?
Why gaze his eyes so wildly round?
What sets his cheeks aflame?

Around his neck an unseen arm
Has laid its circling snow:
A hand he cannot choose but feel
Points to the depths below.

A floating robe of pearly mist
Gleams where his hold is strong ;
A silver voice, like falling rain,
Murmurs a pleading song :

"See where the sunbeams dart and play,
Down in yon chasm-bed !
There lies a rest from every care,
A respite—for the dead !
Thence thy freed soul shall scale the sky
Ten thousand leagues above,
And Eden's white, perpetual flower
Shall bloom for thee in love ! "

His eyes grow dim, his hands grow weak.
The dews bedamp his face.
He looks up at the distant sky,
And prays,—a moment's space.
His hands grow weak, he cannot stay ;
He sinks, no more to rise ;
But his closed hand yet holds in death
That bunch of edelweiss.

THE EDELWEISS.

LET others praise the crimson rose,
Or chant the tulip's song,
Or boast the snowy, slender cup
The lily bears along :
Let others tell of tender thoughts
Sprung in the violet's eyes ;
While life shall last, while heart shall beat,
Sing I the edelweiss.

The edelweiss dwells on the height
  Where sweeps the piercing air ;
The cruel rocks that rise around
  Clutch at her silver hair.
Her foot sinks deep in snow and ice
  To strike the warmer sand ;
Her slender stalk bends to and fro,
  By Alpine breezes fanned.

All day the rocking icicles
  And wind-blown waves of snow
Tell her their secrets as they pass,
  In voices deep and low.
All night she lays her gleaming head
  Upon the mountain's breast,
And those strange sounds that thrill the earth
  Do not disturb her rest.

The edelweiss is small and pale ;
  No glow is on her cheek.
She bears a thought within her breast
  Which yet she does not speak.
Pure, lonely, born to wintry life,
  Heir to perpetual ice !
He must ascend by constant pains
  Who wins the edelweiss.

THE DROP IN THE CLOUD.

A WATER-DROP and a star together
  Sat in a crimson cloud,
When, in the frosty winter weather,
  The merry bells rang loud.

A tiny snow-flake floated, drifted,
  Quivering to the ground.
On crystal-woven wings uplifted
  It fluttered round and round.

And when the spring's first sunrise, blushing,
  Reddened the sky afar,
A snow-drop, through the hard earth pushing,
  Smiled at the distant star.

LOVE RESURRECTED.

I BURIED my love deep, deep,
  In the dimple of Nan's cheek.
"Love," said I, "long be thy sleep!
Brief, but sweet, thy life has been,
Dear the grave I lay thee in.
  All my grief I dare not speak,—
But in death the heart reposes:
Rest, beneath those faint blush-roses."

I spoke, and a whisper came,
  Both a whisper and a thrill:—
"Life to thee is not the same,
Will not be the same again."
Then Nan smiled, to ease my pain.
  Lo! against my hope and will,—
Deep the dimple I selected,—
But—my love was resurrected.

TWILIGHT SONG.

THERE is a yellow butterfly
Swaying upon this little flower;
The cool breeze swings him to and fro,
Yet never swings too low, too high.
It is the happy silence-hour,
And, where the short-stemmed grasses grow,
The firefly lights her little lamp
To guide her children through the damp.

A rain of silver, shimmering light
Falls from the moon's inverted horn;
A wee star lends a twinkling ray
To tremble in the gathering night,
And wait through darkness for the morn.
For there shall come another day
That will unfurl those folded wings,
And empty this sweet flower that swings.

THE TALE OF THE BOAT.

THE boat, the boat, the little boat!
It danced away one morning,
Its sails spread like a dove's pure wings,
The flags its mast adorning.
And the boy who offered its precious freight
Looked till his eyes could see no more,
And then remained to watch and wait
Till the boat came back to the quiet shore

But a storm came, and the cloud bent down
  Its brow all black with thunder,
And the sea grew livid with despair,
  And dashed its crests asunder.
For a wind lashed, like a mighty whip,
  The waves that late had gleamed so white,
And down went many a valiant ship
  And bore its crew from mortal sight.

And the little boat?—Gray age has laid
  On the boy his frosty fingers,
And still, where the boat rocked gayly out,
  An old man dreams and lingers;
And what is so hard as to watch and wait,
  To wait and watch, as the slow years go,
And ask what came of youth's sacred freight,
  And hope, and wonder,—but never know!

THE SENTINEL.

WHERE Russia swells, with freezing breath,
  The streams that vein her snowy breast,
And dooms each bud to early death
  That lifts its head from sluggish rest;
Where every bush is fringed with frost,
  And long, white fingers streak the ground,
The sentinel stands at his post,
  And views the dreary plain around.

A storm sweeps down upon the place:
  The dark clouds burst in cracks of gold,
And pour upon his upturned face
  Soft drops of winter from each fold.

Thick, thick, and white, his winding-sheet
Is lowered to him from the sky ;
The air in kisses keen and sweet
Breathes on his mouth, his cheek, his eye.

The night comes on, and, bathed in light,
The moon looks on her midnight lands ;
The long, loose curtains of the night
The winds draw back, with shifting hands.
With arms crossed tightly on his breast,
With snowy hollows in his face,
Until God sends his day of rest
The sentinel stands in his place.

ELIZABETH.

HUSH ! here is a nook in the dim old aisle
Where never the sun unveils his face,
But leaves just the lingering, tender trace,
Half-look, half-dream, of a daily smile.
A tomb on the marble floor stands here.
Upon it a girl that is carved at rest,
With slight arms folded across her breast,
Has slept in silence this many a year.

Within lies the body, wrapt in death.
They could not hold, though they loved, their own,
So they made her semblance of lasting stone,
And cut at the feet, "Elizabeth."
The name was sent, like a sharp, quick cry,
Through the swinging doors, as they opened then,

To call her back to the life of men—
In vain ! In vain !—from the closing sky.

If good, if ill, were her earthly days
What voice shall tell through a thousand years !
Long since were dried her impassioned tears,
Long since grew silent her hymn of praise.
The very lily her young hand pressed,
So sweet and white when they laid her down,
Each moment darkened to deeper brown,
And fell to dust on her quiet breast.

A cherub, high on the pillared wall,
Bends down his head 'twixt his two crossed wings,
And lights her gloom with the smile he brings
While centuries vanish. And this is all.
Elizabeth ! For a little while
Come back, and whisper but once, apart,—
What peace lies sealed in the pulseless heart
Forever stilled in an angel's smile ?

GRIEF—A FRIEND.

I GIVE thee my hand, O Grief !
I will not shrink, nor dread
So close at thy side to tread ;
I will not loosen my hold
From thine, that is firm and cold ;
I will not pine in regret
For joys that I might have yet ;
I will not ask for release ;

We will walk together in peace
The way, be it long or brief,
If only thy grasp secure
That I keep my own hand pure.

O Grief, I give thee my heart ;
My thoughts, that are all my own,
Yet reach to God's distant throne,
I give thee the kiss I wear
On my lips, to charm despair ;—
I leaned on a coffin-lid
And wrested it from my Dead !—
My life, my love, and my all,
I bring at thy sacred call,
For thou a true friend art.
Whose hand thou once dost take
Thou never dost forsake.

YOUR KINGDOM.

THERE is a corner in my heart,
A little corner kept apart,
Where what is pure, and good, and high,
Is shut away from careless eye.
The curious stranger well may see
The common thoughts that surge through me,
But here I come to be alone,
To feel myself, and be my own.

This small soul-chamber is the place,
Beloved, where I keep your face ;

And here I fit your name to prayers,
And loose myself from trivial cares.
No other yet has ventured here ;
But would you learn what is most dear,
Most tender in me, and most true,
It never shall be closed to you.

LITTLE BESSIE.

COME back, little Bessie, come back !
The door that was opened beneath the snow
Leads through to a wonderful heaven, we know.
We cannot doubt that your heart is glad,
But we—we sit in the dark, and are sad.
We miss the laugh in your great, brown eyes,
We miss your look of perplexed surprise ;
Our arms are empty ; we cannot feel
Your soft breath over our eyelids steal.
We dream at night you are all our own ;
We wake, and the beautiful dream is gone.
Your crossed arms lie on your placid breast ;
You do not start from that calm, deep rest.
You always heard when we called before,
But now you are voiceless forevermore.
Come back, little Bessie, come back !

Our thoughts flew out into future years,
And painted pictures of smiles and tears.
We watched the promising bud unclose
And blossom into a perfect rose.
The child that wondered at every thing ;
The slender maiden, that time would bring ;
The bride betrothed, with her shy, sweet grace ;

The wife, with tenderness in her face ;
The proud young mother, with anxious care
Smoothing the ringlets of baby-hair ;
The stately matron, the grand dame old,
And then—but then would the tale be told.
The story of sorrow still is one,
And death must finish what life begun.
All this in the little child was hid,
And we closed it in with the coffin-lid.

So many angels their voices raise
In ringing anthems that hymn God's praise ;
They stand by thousands around the throne,
Could He not spare us this single one ?
O Christ ! Thou didst stoop at Lazarus' tomb,
And weep, and call out into its gloom
"Come back, come back !" For the tears then shed
The grim death-angel brought back the dead.
We stoop, *we* weep ; again and again
We call aloud, but our cry is vain.
Our baffled love totters back dismayed ;
We veil our hearts and are sore afraid,
Till, sitting dumb with our grief alone,
We hear the sound of an undertone :
"Grieve not, grieve not ! for I love her best.
She is safe at rest ! She is safe at rest !"

SONNET ON SEPARATION.

DEAR, must I always miss thy tender face,
And that large love that dwelt within thine eyes,
And must I, when my soul on heaven cries,
Leave out thy name from its familiar place ?

May God forbid! Somewhere in His domain
The angel in thee shakes its unbound wings
In joy to feel itself so free, and sings,
With silences that echo to our pain.
Thou hast not gone beyond the reach of prayer,
Since where thou art God bends His listening ear;
And Death's cold breath, that wintered all the air,
But formed a cloud around a form so dear,
That, in the darkness, it might seem more fair
To sit apart, yet know that each is near.

THE MEASURE OF LOVE.

HOW do I love thee? Dear, I cannot tell.
Thou dost not think to count the shining beams
That slip off from the sun to warm our earth:
The oak-leaf, folded to a living cup,
May serve to hold a single drop of dew
That hangs its crystal globe against the green,
But it will never tremble round a sea.
So is our language, when we fit the words
To deepest thoughts. All speech is but a growth
Whose germ lies dormant in necessities;
It never reaches out to the divine.
What we can fully tell is slight indeed.
We turn, and twist, and narrow by degrees,
And lose the thought in the expressing it.
But God is love, and what we feel of heaven
Is love, too; and my all I gather up

In my full soul to make a gift to thee.
Look in my eyes, and read thy title there,
Interpreting by love. The infinite
Alone can comprehend the infinite.

THE OLD GRAY HOUSE.

I COULD paint you a picture if I would.
An old gray house that for years has stood ;
A swift, bright river that flows beside,
And folds an isle to its bosom wide ;
A yard that slopes down a low, brown hill,
Where summer-juices the grape-skins fill.
I could paint the leaves of wind-stirred trees,
And the dusty coats of the honey-bees,
And the just-poised wings of the butterflies,
But what would it be to a stranger's eyes ?
A great old house on the river shore,
A grassy garden,—and nothing more !

I could paint you a mother's tender face,
Thrilled through and through with the soul's own grace,
The large, dark eyes, and the silver hair
That waves away from a brow still fair.
My four sweet sisters ! my brother dear !
Could I paint this picture and you not here ?
By the memories of our bygone years,
By our childish laughter, our causeless tears ;
By the games we played in that yard of old,
The hopes we cherished, the tales we told,
As the picture deepened beneath my hand
You would smile, and tremble, and understand.

You would know the branch of the apple-tree
Where we sat afloat on a blossom-sea ;
You would smell the odors from garden-beds
Where the pansies nodded their pretty heads ;
You could find in the dark the fragrant spots
That were sweet with the ghosts of forget-me-nots,
And of white day-lilies, that show a face
That can smile but once in a gloomy place.
The old gray house would be full for you
Of dreams and memories, dear and true ;
Of childhood's fancies that no child tells ;
Of lover's kisses and marriage-bells.

You would hear the echo of each old song
That the sweet piano shook out so long,
When our flying fingers along the keys
Went pressing the springs of hid melodies.
I could paint you all that is bright and glad,
But should draw the veil where the times were sad.
Shall the stranger know how our tears were shed ;
Shall he count the hopes that lie still and dead ?
Our joys fly swiftly from tongue to tongue,
But the tried friend knows when the heart is wrung.
Yes, the old gray house of our lives is part.
I have painted the picture from my heart.

TIME.

O TIME, swift runner between birth and death !
Thy face is radiant with imprisoned light
Poured out on thee from two eternities,
That edge, on either side, thy narrow beat.

Thy breast is shaken with thy stormy breath.
Thy left hand robs our treasures, but the right
Holds gifts to gild our coming destinies,
That thou, in passing, droppest at our feet.

Thou art the healer of all human ill.
Thy solemn eyes send out a single look,
And, of our deepest sorrow, we but trace
A tingling in the chords of memory.
What heart is that thy cold touch cannot still?
What tear-stained page in life's unfinished book
But thou dost set a poem in its place?
What love that grows no more nor less for thee?

Cruel Time! thou bringest heaps of gradual snow
To scatter it on childhood's sunny hair,
And filmy veils to cast on sparkling eyes
Whose gleam has magic for all spells but thine.
Thou teachest lips the song of Long Ago;
Thou bringest wrinkles for the cheek that 's fair,
And, close behind thee, Death's dark angel flies
To stamp thy labor with a seal divine.

And yet thou art the kindest friend of all.
Thy hand holds honors out for men to reach,
And drops down gold for hungry want to grasp.
Thy fingers drape the folds of bridal lace
When pale cheeks flush, and eyelids shyly fall;
And thou, when hearts beat faster than our speech
Has power to utter, teachest that firm clasp
When friends long parted first stand face to face.

O Time ! thy brow is passionless and grim.
When hast thou wept where bitter tears were shed ?
When hast thou smiled where merry laughs were heard ?
Thou givest, and thy bosom knows no pain ;
Thou takest, but no tears thy keen eyes dim,—
For thou hast seen the angels of the dead,
And thine ears listen to God's mystic word
That makes the meaning of earth's puzzle plain.

WAITING.

I STAND on the shore of the tossing sea,
And look at the ship that is just in sight,
And dream of the peace it will bring to me
When Dawn from her garland drops buds of light.
I know that for many the hopes must fail
That open the arms, that suffuse the eye ;
Yet gladly I smile as the harp-shaped sail
Is painted white on the far-off sky.

I know that within it the people speak
Of home and of friends they shall meet once more,
And tears all unnoticed roll down the cheek
At sight of the long broken line of shore.
And one gazes eagerly on, apart,
Half-patient, half-yielding to sweet unrest.
O Ocean ! breathe quietly, for my heart
Is beating out there on your shining breast.

HEART OF MINE.

TEACH me, O Heart of mine, some word
More tender than words have ever been !
Brim it with love's most cordial wine,
Thrill it with melody never heard.
Pure as juices that form within
The globes that hang on the low grape-vine,
Sweet as aught that the sun goes round
On his daily track, make the little sound.

O Heart, how long have we sat alone
In that inmost inner that none else knows,
And mourned our weakness, both thou and I ?
We fain would smile, but the bitter groan
Breaks unaware when the lips unclose.
We stretch the hand, but no help is nigh.
So we learn the lesson of silent pain,
And fasten the bolts on our tears again.

Yet teach me the song that is born of tears ;
O sweet and tender that song must be !
And teach me to lean on my mother's breast,
And say that word in her waiting ears.
O Heart, I turn in my need to thee !
Make me as one who, in deep unrest
On surging waters tossed to and fro,
Speaks peace to others he cannot know.

Breathe not a word of a fair young face
Fast wearing down to the prisoned soul !

Say not that violets on her heart
Will lie full soon in a pulseless place,
And greet no eye, as the thick years roll.
What words thou must speak, as deep tears start,
Must first be wrung from grief's bitter cup,
And from love's clear chalice be offered up.

I will not utter in friendship's ear
The word, O Heart, that thou givest me,
Nor cheek of lover shall ever glow
In warm response to that whisper dear.
No careless stranger shall ever see
The printed word that we only know.
I would but charm from its dwelling-place
That anxious look on my mother's face.

FROM MY WINDOW.

MY narrow window frames a square
Of sky cut from the full, wide west,
And sweeping with the sweeping air
Or quiet as the sleep-stilled breast.
Sometimes the clouds, in fleecy heaps,
Obstruct the shining paths of day,
Or build intangible, thin steeps,
A zephyr's wing might brush away ;
Or night draws down her filmy lids
To shade her thousand starry eyes,
Or, throned on sable banks, she bids
Her moon cleave through the stormy skies.

Now flocks of birds go flying by
  And in and out the casement dip,
And shake my little bit of sky
  Like words that falter on the lip.
And now a rainbow points its end
  Down toward the tops of three tall trees,
That all their swinging branches blend
  And interlace, in every breeze.
The leaves in summer dance and toss,
  Each pendant on its slender stem,
And sunset flings her jewels across
  The spaces, and embroiders them.

Or on a clear December night
  The bare, brown branches touch the sky,
And rifted clouds drop streaks of light
  That fleck the tree-tops brokenly ;
Till, suddenly, a rosy tinge
  Begins to hint the rising day,
And stars, thick-braided in a fringe
  That drapes the high boughs, melt away.
O, western sky, and flying birds !
  O, early hours, and vigils late !
Shall man have power to fix in words
  What God must daily re-create !

A CHANCE LOOK.

SHE at her window sat, and spun ;
  He walked past in the street :
And was it then so very strange
  Their eyes should just once meet ?

For he looked in as she looked out—
Her eyelids fell ere long!
And then again she twirled her wheel,
And tuned her broken song.

She could not follow if she would,
So he went on alone;
And days and weeks that lay between
To weary years have grown.
And yet her face bursts on his soul
On many a foreign shore,
While she,—why does she at her work
Sing that old rhyme no more?

GREECE.

O GLORIOUS Greece! O land where twilight lingers!
O home where beauty long held joyous sway!
Why dost thou stretch thy thin and shadowy fingers
Out to me, dwelling in the light of day?
What is the song those cold lips murmur over?
What is the charm that dwells within thine eye?
Robbed of thy treasures, wouldst thou still recover
Fame for the hearts that throbbed beneath thy sky?
Gone are thy marbles, and thy temples broken;
Even thy graves have given up what was dear;
Still are the lips that once thy praise have spoken;
Closed are the eyes that shed for thee a tear.

Once in thy depths dwelt naiads in the fountains,
And in thy dells the nymphs roved glad and free ;
Gods had their homes upon thine ancient mountains ;
Dryads were happy in each stately tree.
Tingling, the warm life thrilled thy verdant bosom,
Swayed in thy tall reeds, flowed along thy streams,
Shook with its wild throbs every trembling blossom,
Flushed in the warm sky, mingled in thy dreams.
Pan played his reed-pipe in Arcadian meadows,
Orpheus enchanted hard rocks with his lay,
Psyche's bright wing moved through both sun and shadow,—
All, all have vanished from the world away !

If thy proud trees sigh, whispering together,
They but remember pleasures that are past,
When lovely nymphs, in laughing April weather,
Hid in their rough bark, safely held and fast.
Long, long they grieved, when dryads ran no longer,
With their light feet, a shelter to implore.
Once their close hold was tenderer, was stronger,
Than death itself had power to triumph o'er.
Long, long the branches, thick with foliage laden,
Shook when a quick step sounded through the glen ;
But it was always some warm, human maiden,—
Goddesses, once gone, never come again.

How did thy pools mourn, tremulous with anguish,
When they reflected shining eyes no more !

How did thy sweet buds pale with grief, and languish,
Drooping their heads on the deserted shore!
Great, melting eyes from which the lovelight gushes,
Rich depths of tresses floating in the air,
Bare, snowy breasts, feet rosy on the rushes,—
Why were ye transient, since ye were so fair?
Where Pan once cooled his feet in whirling water,
All prints of goat-hoofs long have passed away;
The sun-browned hands of Homer's dusky daughter
Plunges the urn in those clear founts to-day.

Yet grieve not, Greece, because thy gods are banished,
Nor deem the myths thou trustedst were untrue.
'T is but the outward form they wore has vanished,
The soul it clothed is ever born anew.
Thy yellow marbles are our types of beauty,
Thy temples' fame has spread to every shore;
Thy wise men teach us still of worth and duty,
Thy deeds of valor circle as of yore.
Who would drink deep of sorrow and of pleasure,
Or pants to know life's holy mysteries,
Must stretch his hands to raise thy hidden treasure,
And light his torch at thy fallen fanes, O Greece.

GOOD-BY TO THE OLD HOUSE.

HERE is the chamber of my rest,
Where I in dreams beheld his face;
Where waking thoughts with peace were blest,
And smiles went twinkling through the place.

And here the quiet parlor stands,
  Where whispered words were low and sweet
When first, with strong and tender hands,
  He raised me till our lips could meet.

The white sleep-angel folds his wings
  But once across my closing eyes,
Before the pictures that he brings
  Out from the hidden past arise.
The old life blossoms to the new,
  Yet joy still finds room for a tear ;
Good-by, old house ! Your walls are true,
  So keep my secret treasured here.

GONE AWAY.

SHE has gone into the sea of space,
  Held in the arms of the dying year ;
Minute by minute, upon her face
He laid a smile for eternity ;
Minute by minute, he wore the trace
Of earthly sorrow and pain away,—
Weakened the flesh that bound her here,
Strengthened the part that can never die,—
Till the finished soul flashed out one day,
Lingered a moment to say "Good-by" ;
And the Old Year carried her on his breast
Forth to the portals that guard her rest ;
And the grief she shook from her hands forever,
Fell on our hearts to leave them never.

O men and women, forbear to speak
Of what shall be as the years roll on!
Lift those long eyelashes from the cheek
Our kisses wonder to find so cold.
Our love is strong, if our strength is weak!
Kindle the light of those clear, gray eyes!
Call back the something we feel is gone,
The mystic something we found of old!
Rend asunder the golden skies,
And give her back for our arms to hold!
Or, if your power does not reach to this,
All is idle and meaningless.
Words are dry as the clods above her,
When you speak them to those who love her.

Be still, for grief is a sacred thing,
And alien lips may not soothe the smart;
Your words are strange to the sorrowing;
They flow too smooth from the happy lips
That else part only to smile and sing.
O my sweet sister, my sister yet,
Though Death's chill whisper has stilled your heart,
And hid your spirit in swift eclipse!
How glad that smile, and without regret,
That, as alive, on your dead mouth keeps!
O let me joy, by that death-long smile,
To feel you guarded from pain or guile!
If one must weep for the other parted,
God knew the one that was stronger-hearted.

UNTRUE.

SHE wears a kiss upon her lips,
A ring upon her finger.
Why should that look of restless woe
Around her sad eyes linger?
Why should she glance with hate and fear
Upon that sacred symbol,
While yet, along life's pleasant walks,
Her steps are light and nimble?

It is my kiss upon her mouth,
And his the ring she 's wearing:
Her truth passed like a parting soul,
And left us both despairing.
If love has found one woman pure
Where sin's dark cup runs over,
My soul elects her for a judge
Between this maid and lover

IF THEY KNEW.

IF only my mother knew
How my heart is hurt within me,
She would take my face in her tender hands
And smooth my cheek, as she used to do
In the days that seem so long ago,
When childish tears were quick to flow;
She would smooth my face with her tender hands
If she felt the grief within me.

If only my lover knew
Of the surging, passionate sorrow,
He would hold me close to his sturdy breast,
As once he held me the long hours through,—
When we had not learned to live apart,
But leaned for love on each other's heart;
He would hold me close to his heaving breast,
If he guessed my passionate sorrow.

But it pierces me like a knife
To think that they do not know it;
To think they can look in my pleading eyes,
Yet never question my hidden life;—
Can touch my lips in the same old place
Yet never look for the soul in my face.
Oh, the tears are bitter that fill my eyes
To know that they do not know it!

I HAVE SEEN THEM TOGETHER.

I HAVE seen them together,
As I sat alone.
His eyes shone with pleasure;
The tears filled my own.

I have seen them together;
His kisses were sweet.
O Heart! hast thou felt this,
And dost thou still beat?

THE MIRACLE.

IN the old, sweet story that John wrote down
To stir the hearts of a world of men,
A blind man begged in Jerusalem.
It was nothing strange. Who remembers when
In this great, glad world, in the midst of all
The joy and glory, none sat apart,
With a dead hope kept from the common sight,
And the closing stone rolled against his heart?

It was nothing new; so the multitudes
Went surging by, without thought or care,
Until One drew out from the busy throng
And paused by the blind man waiting there.
No silver shone in His outstretched hand,
Yet priceless the gift that He bore that day;
For His love reached out to the springs of sight,
And the life-long darkness was torn away.

In the old, sweet story that John wrote down
No word is whispered of after-years,
Did he follow Christ through the sunny streets,
And pour out worship like falling tears?
When the Master spoke, was there one who heard
The large truths said, though the words were brief?
When the Master died, was he kneeling there
His whole soul shaken with love and grief?

Or did he turn to the world again—
The world made bright to his seeing eyes,—

And lose the thankfulness from his heart,
And those pulsations of glad surprise?
Was his life belittled by anxious cares
And reckonings for the morrow's gain?
Did his heart forget all its sad, dark days?
Was Love's great miracle wrought in vain?

What tongue shall tell us? One after one
The solemn centuries fall to dust,
And the old, old mystery still remains
Of blinded eyes, and of wavering trust.
Love works his miracles in our hearts;
Faith points her hand to the distant skies.
We shall know, perhaps, when the touch of death
At last leaves open the soul's dim eyes.

THOUGHTS.

OH, what may be an angel's thoughts
Just brought before God's sacred throne,
Who, 'mid ten million breathing harps,
Half human, first essays his own!

But what may be a mortal's thoughts
Who holds God's secrets in his eyes,
As the Norse mountain, peak by peak,
Reflected in the still lake lies!

A MEETING.

WE took each other by the hand
Who had not met for years,
And on our cheeks we felt the warmth
Of sudden-falling tears.

Our joy and grief together poured
As still our feelings wrought,
And love could scarcely find the words
That fitted to our thought.

For we remembered, when we last
Looked in each other's face
A woman's eyes shone on us both,
And blessed the whole dim place.

O, have you ever closed the eyes
That looked most sweet to you,
And leaned above the coffin-lid,
And felt your heart drawn through?

And do you think that we could meet
Without a shaken heart,
When death for her and life for us
Held our tired hands apart?

A PORTRAIT.

O MEMORY, swing the shut doors back for me,
And let me see again the face I loved!

Eyes gray and tender as the morning gloom,
When the warm light comes through it; snowy lids

That rose and fell like the bright tides of love ;
The whole closed round with thick, brown, curling
hair.
A brow whose innocence made one afraid
To tell his own wild thoughts to his own soul ;
A look so childlike that one half forgot
She was a woman grown, until the blush
Grew in her cheek to find it gazed upon.
Withal, a sensitive, sweet mouth—a mouth
That had a glad smile for me always !

O Memory, swing fast the door again !
My heart will break if I remember more !

A DREAM OF PYGMALION.

O LOVE, to dream myself back through the centuries,
And be Pygmalion ! To feel the thrill
Creep tingling through my veins, as the deep eyes
Came forth, the lovely creatures of my will !
To set the fine veins in the dimpled hands !
To round the curves about the unstirred breast !
To poise the light foot on the rippled sands,
And fix the beauty I but half had guessed !

And then the hush and glory of surprise
When from her pedestal the goddess moved,
By love made woman, sweet with mysteries
Of blush and downcast eyes that told she loved

O golden moment, when the veins he traced
First throbbed, and first the unsealed lips did part,
And, where his careful hand the clasp had placed,
The carven robe swelled on a beating heart!

And yet the sculptor, had he but the might
To dream a happy dream of present days,—
Could Galatea's eyes have won their light,
Her form its soul, from his impassioned praise?
A subtler mind than his hath thought thee, Love,
A Hand divine moulded each perfect limb.
Thy face was drawn from angel choirs above;
Thy soul was kindled at a star by Him.

I dare not say that none may equal thee.
The Mind that made thee holdeth many a thought.
Why should His power be narrowed down by me,
That I should measure out what He has wrought?
But at thine eyes my spirit drinks full deep
A cordial nobler than all earthly wine;
And all my heart swells till I fain would weep,
Because I know thee mine. I swear it! Mine!

WAIT.

WAIT, wait! In the bud the flower lies sleeping,
Her white arm under her golden head.
The dreams that into her heart come creeping
Will leave their memories in her keeping.

Some day, when the flower stands straight at your
feet
And you find that her breath is pure and sweet,
Be you sure, in the dusty garden bed
The flower remembers a dream that is dead.

The mummied butterfly low is swinging
His dim brown case where the thick leaves cling;
Their bright paths into the blossoms winging
The merry bees at their work go singing;
The butterfly lies secure in rest,
With gay wings wrapped on his dusky breast.
Wait, wait! For waiting and silence bring
The strength and ardor for every thing.

Wait, only wait! For your life shall sweeten
Down to its core in the suns of years.
Ere golden grain from the chaff be beaten,
Ere we crown the year with a garland wheaten,
Long months of ripening must go by;
Slow moons crawl over the changing sky.
Shake off the hurry and needless fears,
And smiles will shine in the place of tears.

A WHITE ROSE.

THERE grows a rose within my sight,
Set high upon its pliant stem.
All other roses in the place—
Look close! One will not fail to see
A trace of earthliness in them.
If one half-hides a blushing face

The sun has looked too warmly there ;
And one through soft, green, mossy hair
Looks coyly out to peep at me ;
Or, if one pull the leaves apart,
A burning thought deep in the heart
Has left its stain on one sweet rose ;
And one in vivid crimson glows ;
But this—this single rose is *white.*

And what am I that I should dare
To claim this white rose for my own ?
There is but one in all the town
May fitly wear it on her breast ;
The bud kept pure for her alone.
Sweet, if those modest eyes of brown
Fall on this flower before it dies,
And in those folds of lace it lies,
To rise and fall in cradled rest,—
It may be that its quick fine ear
The heart-beats underneath may hear.
O bid that heart say to the rose :
" The whitest love the longest glows,
And more than sweetness nestles there ! "

WINTER.

O WINTER, come !
For we remember frosty nights when moonlight
Dropped in long rays down through the biting air,
And all the stars were caught in films of silver
Punctured by vagrant glitter everywhere.
Come, hang on our low eaves thy icy banners,

And rim for every pond its shallow bowl,
And sift thy fine, white powder through the grasses,
And fringe the bushes with thy aureole.
Lay thick thy folds across the earth's cold bosom,
Depend thy jewels in the hill's brown ear,
And, where the last leaves tremble on the branches,
Give to their constancy a gleaming tear.
The patient evergreen has long been waiting
For whom the summer bears no gorgeous crown;
She only of the trees still wears, to grace thee,
Her dull green garments folded closely down.
O Winter, point with white each tiny needle,
And in and out the branches toss thy hands
Until, half-hid in pearly mists of splendor,
Thy long, slow kisses move her, as she stands.
Here, where the wood-plants shroud their wrinkled blossoms,
With thy stiff finger trace the shrivelled vein;
Fill all the hollows where the Fall is dying
With the kind level of thy frozen rain.

O Winter, set thy lips to thy great trumpet
And send a long, strong blast out into space!
Spring, when she sings, shakes all her bordering daisies:
Glad Summer, with the smile warm on her face,
Sends those low songs she loves like winged things skyward:
While Autumn, glass in hand, is hoarse with wine.
But thou, O Winter! Thou, great Music-Spirit!
Dost claim all melody as rightly thine,
Like some old Master brooding o'er his organ,
Whose soul steals, bit by bit, into the keys.

Dumb is the sky ; its vast, dark porch is silent,
Until thy hands stretch toward the waiting trees.
Thy fingers are the winds : the trees bend over
And speak thy thoughts through every twirling leaf—
One wild, swift chord that whips the boughs together
As if a prisoned anger sought relief ;
Then, one by one, the notes are flung asunder,
Still bound forever by one solemn strain,
And through the dissonance one almost loses
The dim completeness of that weird refrain.
The blowing grasses speak throughout the pauses
And fill the stops with faint songs of their own ;
While, underneath its cloak of ice, the river
Keeps muttering its ceaseless monotone.
Yet come not as a warrior. Drear and barren
Are those bleak stars that thou hast made thy own.
And none are left to praise thee where, victorious,
Above extinguished fires is set thy throne.
In every home we build an altar to thee,
Heaped high with treasures from an age gone by,
And here the growth of many a fragrant summer
Ascends in smoke to greet a wintry sky.
Where power is great and greatly used, we love it ;
But, where thy wheel in widening circles rolls,
Where thy strong hand buffets an airless planet,
Yet, know a mightier Power than thine controls.
There is a Law that moves in constant cycles ;
It moulds the burning globe of every sun ;
It draws in curves a million unseen pathways,
And drives a plunging light on every one.
When He has measured out thy long dominion

Quick from thy straining hand the rod shall fall,
And summer's shrill, high treble shall sound farther
Than thy deep bass urged to its utmost call.
Roses shall blow ; the jointed reeds shall whisper ;
Forget-me-nots shall paint an earthly sky ;
Through every leaf the fire of life shall quiver,
And thou shalt live but as a memory.

A SONG TO LOVE.

O LOVE, come near ! I would sing thee a song.
I sang for the world, but she turned away.
These are not her times for song ; her ear
When coins are counted is quick to hear,
But she spares no thought for the birds of May,
If they sing her right or they sing her wrong.
Her hand is rounded to scrape up gold ;
A flower would drop from its spurning hold.
If she turn her eyes
To the sunset skies,
She may miss a tithe of her yellow prize ;
And, held and bound
From outside sound,
Her thoughts turn aimlessly round and round.
So, Love, come near. I would sing thee a song.

Oh ! many a poet has sung for thee,
With words that glowed as they left the heart
In verses fashioned in every clime.
Yet know, if my thoughts could flow out in rhyme,
As strong as a mountain, as swift as a dart,
As high as to heaven, as deep as the sea,

Upholding the right, and outbarring the wrong,
Would peal forth the notes of my beautiful song.
As solemn as death,
As gentle as breath,
They would brighten all hope, and sweeten all faith.
So, Love, come near
To pause and hear
The fountain-bursts from my brain to thy ear—
Though many a poet has sung for thee.

TO A MARBLE MERCURY.

BENEATH thy marble mask, what pains must tear thee
Since, having bound thy sandals on thy feet,
Earth holds thee captive here, and will not spare thee,
For that thy image is so fair and sweet!
Long in thy chains, what visions were entrancing
Of skies when morning in her soft, pink ear
Hangs one bright star, her loveliness enhancing;
Or when the lark drops through the dewy air,
His early song half glory and half prayer.
Or dost thou yearn for purple clouds and golden

That surge in waves across the sun's bright shield,
Remembering the fires of sunsets olden
When thy swift wings beat toward the Olympian field?

What is the message that thou must deliver,
  Delayed for many a year, but treasured still ?
In what deep vale, or by what sparkling river,
  Have the gods charged thee to reveal their will ?
Those mute, cold lips are parted not for laughter ;
  They would but tell those mystic words alone ;
But genius, searching the world's corners after
  Some fair ideal, froze thee into stone.

O Mercury, thy destiny is human !
  Upon our souls are bound the eager wings.
Be sure to every mortal, man or woman,
  A quick, fine spirit some one message brings.
Whence was it given? We know not. Each to-morrow
  We hear the words go echoing through the brain.
Clogged with our earth, and riveted to sorrow,
  We struggle to translate, but seek in vain.

JESSIE.

WE knew for months that she was going to die,
  And watched the spirit ebbing from her slowly.
We saw the shadows deepen in her eye,
  And felt her faint smile change to be more holy

She daily grew more weak, more pale, more thin ;
  Death's purpose seemed by her sweet patience shaken.
We almost saw the soul that dwelt within
  Come lifting its glad arms up to be taken.

At last, the quiet change came over her.
  Death stooped to kiss her, knowing her pure-hearted,
And, rising, left a breast that did not stir,
  And lips that at the angel's passage parted.

There were the hands we had so often pressed,
  The engagement-ring still shining on the finger;
That was her weary head at last at rest;
  That was her mouth, where smiles were wont to linger.

A tall gray shaft stands near her narrow bed—
  Not on it—for she was so young and slender,
We could not heap the marble o'er her head,
  Nor burden that weak frame, so tired and tender.

Sometimes we stretch our arms out towards the sky
  And dream she comes down from the fields Elysian,
And weep in ecstacy—but by and by
  We wring our hands to find it was a vision.

If, sometimes, stealing from the starry street,
  An angel looks out from the beauteous portal,
And listens for the tread of coming feet
  Along the path from mortal to immortal,

And if she lays her tuneful harp aside,
  And if her song stops for a moment only,—
Although her love grows deeper since she died
  She waits so calmly she cannot be lonely.

THE BROKEN SPAR.

WHAT drives so fast through the stormy sea,
Now watched, now lost, by yon pallid star?
Two men lashed close to a broken spar,
And whirled along toward eternity.

Can life exist where the wind and wave
With greed and menace clutch hand on throat?
These live, these speak, in the night afloat,
Where the ship shrank down to a grassless grave.

One voice! "My brother, our grave below
Is drawing us with her fingers cold.
Has death forgiveness within his hold?
O grant me pardon before we go!"

A voice in answer: "If heaven for me
Meant solely this, that I should forgive—
Yet know, I die even as I live,
And hate goes down with me in the sea."

What drives so fast through the storm and night?
Two dead men, bound to a shattered beam.
One face is lit by an angry gleam,
And one is warmed by a smile of light.

THE LITTLE WIFE AT HOME.

MINE eyes run o'er with pleasant drops;
My life is set in tune.
No nightingale on starry eves
Has poured such music from the leaves

That crown the locks of June.
The queen that rules me sits alone ;
No other shall divide her throne
Until this heart its beating stops—
The little wife at home !

She makes my house the happy place
Where I delight to be—
Love's temple, kept by her dear care
As clean as if a god dwelt there,
And purer far to me.
With busy hands she touches all,
And order follows at her call,
As round she moves with quiet grace—
The little wife at home !

I see the thronging people pass
Along the crowded street,
And wonder if each home can be
As glad, as dear, as this to me,
And as supremely sweet.
Whatever sorrows may betide,
God send this hope be not denied :
For every man his own sweet lass—
The little wife at home !

AWAKENMENT.

THE fires are kindled in the eastern skies,
Yet no one looks to see. My love, awake !
Too long sleep locks the portals of thine eyes.
Stay not to braid thy coal-black hair ; arise,

And the nice fingers of the errant breeze
  Shall play thy handmaid, while the twinkling lake
Shall be a mirror worthy her who sees.

Come, let us idly those vague outlines trace
  That mark the skyey giant, hoar and grim,
Whose lidless eye, the sun, burns in his face,
Unquenched by years, and with impartial gaze
Beholds the generations, one by one,
  Which rise and die with eyes upturned to him,
And see him changeless still, their race being done.

Arise ! arise ! Shake off the drowsy sprite
  That weaves his feigning web within thy brain.
Give day his due, and banish lingering night.
May no dull lotos dim thy fuller sight !
Thine be the glowing heart, the thrilling tongue,
  The daily labor that inures to pain,
But lends such rest as keeps the spirit young !

ISRAFÎL.

HARK ! What dread blast rides on the trembling air ?
It is the angel Israfîl who calls.
He puts the trumpet to his mouth, and blows,
And the deep sound goes echoing everywhere.
Arising bodies burst their clay-lined walls ;
From heights of ether souls fall down like snows ;
They lodge within the trumpet's mighty mouth,
And, with his breath, to East, West, North, and South
They fly out in a swarm that fills all space,
And, searching through recumbent ranks, find each
  its dwelling-place.

Hast thou had grief, O Soul, to leave the frame?
And hast thou, kept in duress, longed to dart
At will within the caverns of the brain?
Has thy long, forced composure known the same
Old mortal feeling of unrest? A heart
Deprived of beating, hast thou gasped in pain?
O has it moved thee that the tender grass
Should spead its carpet where thou couldst not pass?
And have the spendthrift roses wooed thy love
To thoughts of well-known garden, or dim glade,
or rustling grove?

Then come! Mohammed leads the way. The bell,
The silver tongue of joy, rings with the light.
Celestial choirs are carolling on high;
Heaven's courts are emptied that this song may swell.
Thou art alone. No eye holds thee in sight
Save that familiar Cyclops of the sky
That long has been thy confidant. Come near
The springs of life, and drink new vigor here.
Eternity is more than man can think,
And thou shalt be, when worlds shall rage along
destruction's brink.

PROHIBITION PARTY SONG.

WHENCE comes that peal that shakes the sky?
'T is God who thunders from on high:
"Ye that have borne my name so long,
Nor stretched your hand to right the wrong,
Arise! For this I made you strong."

Freemen, arise! The votes that fall
Are counted in heaven's justice-hall;
And with them rise the mother's prayer,
The children's cry, the man's despair,
The grief that sears us everywhere.

Come, join with us. Our force is strong,
For arming angels round us throng.
No fight for right is fought in vain.
Christ died for souls; we strive to gain
The kindred ransom of the brain.

THE CHARGE.

MEN who won the battles
Fought in years gone by!
Men who bore the banner,
Sworn to do or die!
Do you sit in quiet?
Do you shrink or fear?
Up! The country calls you.
Up! The foe is here.

Hear the cry of childhood,
Bowed with bitter woe.
See the wife fall, stricken
By a drunken blow.
Now an evil threatens,
Scorching to the soul—
Would you know its nature?
Seek it in the bowl.

Hear the charge we bring you,
  You who act for all!
Meet the need that beckons
  Though the bravest fall.
Strike the evil crouching
  At the nation's heart.
Who dares not be loyal,
  Let him stand apart.

By the child that prattles
  On your knee to-night;
By the wife whose smiling
  Fills your house with light;
By the tender mother
  Who bent over you,
We who can but charge you
  Charge you to be true.

THE OLD MAIDS' CLUB.

O TIME! here prostrate at thy feet,
  Thy mercy we with tears implore;
If thou hast taken what was sweet,
  Yet have we ever loved thee more.
What can we say to gain thine ear?
Thy every moment is most dear;
Thou art a spirit to be wooed
That dwellest amid solitude.

Well may we say, with trembling lip,
  That we have never been forgot;

Thy frosts have taken care to nip
  Our roses and forget-me-not.
Thy steady, never-stopping hand
Has calmly poured our measured sand,
And not one grain or fast or slow
Fell out because we wished it so.

The wrinkles lie across the face
  That lovers' lips have praised as fair,
And gray hairs lurk around the place
  Where once lay warm, thick waves of hair.
A shadow from the spirit lies
In the embrazure of the eyes;
Our feet walk slowly on the way,
That ran in spring's first merry day.

We would not mourn that this must be:
  Life is too hard to live again.
'T is not for this we kneel to thee,
  And tell our bosoms' inmost pain.
O Time, our secret we have kept;
But, when we waked and when we slept
One thought came ever, as thoughts can—
A man! a man! a man! a man!

We ask no gift, no herald new
  Of youth that never shall decay.
Who asks the mid-day sun for dew,
  Or in December looks for May?
But grant we may so hold the net
That we may take some straggler yet,
And be to Hymen's altar led;—
For woman's life-work is to wed!

LASTING BEAUTY.

YOUR smile is like the first sweet dawn
That blushed away the night;
Your glances cut like tempered steel;
Your step is proud and light.
Yet, when I fain would sing your praise
And string my whispering lute,
Distrust, her hand laid on her mouth,
Compels me to be mute.

O Lady! mark the hidden charm
That underlies the face.
Undo your soul's barred prison-door
And learn a truer grace.
The rose that fed June's perfumed breath
What hand shall pluck to-day?
And she whose beauty is of earth
Is heiress to decay.

Who sings to Helen songs of praise?
Her glory all is rust.
The worm alone can reach the ear
That listens in the dust.
When angels' wings vibrate and flash
Within the cloudless eyes,
A beauty quickens at the root
Whose growth is for the skies.

ON SHAKESPEARE.

MY Shakespeare! Thou art mine by that close claim
In which the noblest is a gift to each
Who will but stretch to bring it into reach;
And he who will not, owns alone in name,
And drags the banner of a lofty aim.
Thou Cheops of the mind! For thou didst teach
How men might build the pyramid of speech,
And, thought by thought, lead up the ponderous frame.
Full many a poet has, in his own day,
Explored thy passages and breathed thy air,
Traced thy inscriptions, and then passed away.
Their dust is dust: thine, granite. What shall wear
Thy huge, hewn blocks to weaken and decay,
Or lay thy rocky intersections bare?

ON LONGFELLOW.

OUR Longfellow! Our poet whom we love!
Voice of the heart that beats in every breast!
Thou, like a skilled physician, hast addressed
Thy finger to the quick pulse of unrest;
And in thy touch we feel the hand of love,
We lose the weak despair that is akin
To the black fledglings in the nest of sin.
We feel the song more lasting than the groan,
And see Eternal Mercy on His throne.

Thou dost not wheel the chariot of war,
Nor pour rich wine into a golden bowl.
Thus kings are served for hire ; the thirsty soul
Seeks at thy fountain an unfailing dole.
With upraised eyes we mark the distant star
That gleams, a diamond on the zone of night,
And dream the radiance of its nearer light.
But, for the warmth our daily needs require,
We spread our hands before the household fire.

As Moses, gathering for his history
The tales that man had never writ before,
Passed in and out of every humble door
And sifted from traditions his full store
Of knowledge hoarded but in memory ;
So, in the common round of life, thou, too,
Didst part the dross from what is pure and true,
And what our grosser minds had pictured dull
Thy gentle touch has rendered beautiful.

HÜBNER'S CHRIST-CHILD.

WELL hast thou, Hübner, guessed the little child
Full of incipient divinity
That lay on Mary's breast, or may have cast
Soft hazel glances, perched on Joseph's knee !
Encircled by a glory of bright hair
Those small, sweet, Jewish features seem to show
A sudden dream, that raised the chubby hand
And set the curved cheeks quietly aglow.
On one round shoulder rests a lily-stem

Where three Ascension-lilies open wide.
Bare, save for beauty, are the childish feet—
Such feet as every mother loves to hide
In her warm hands, nestled against her side.

It is the baby-Christ that we behold,
Clad in the little robe that Mary wrought
With golden borders broidered on the white,
And every golden stitch a tender thought.
It is the child that watched the shavings fly,
Or followed Joseph through the quiet town;
The child that pattered through the little home,
Or hid his face within his mother's gown.
O babyhood, exempt from later cares!
Time of vague thought and frequent warm caress!
First twilight of the senses! We are glad
That Christ, though God, was human none the less,
And on life's edge was wrapped in tenderness.

O little feet, rough was your path, though short!
O shining hair, thorns grew to press on thee!
O little dreamer, life was kind and hard—
First rosy childhood, then Gethsemane!
Thy life was spoken in antithesis,
The cradle and the cross! Thou hast felt all.
Joy sang the prelude to the immortal psalm,
And shuddering anguish let the last notes fall.
For thy life, lonely in its perfectness,
We strain our eyes towards distant Galilee;
Yet joy to think thou hadst thy opening hours
Of human childhood, bright and sorrow-free,
That Hübner painted not unworthy thee.

THE JEWISH FLUTE.

IT was but a reed in a sedgy place
  Where Israel pitched their camps one night,
With root tight-bound to the narrow space
  Where its life-force gathered, hid from sight.
Only a long, green, living line
  That summer drew on the heavy air;
No Jewish maiden would ever twine
  Its jointed length in her dusky hair.
But one in a regiment of spears
  That nature pushed aloft to glisten;
Or one of those sharply-pointed ears
  That the eager earth sends out to listen.

A dreamy man cut the dreamy reed,
  And brought it out from its marshy bed;
He trimmed and notched it to suit his need
  Until it was empty and smooth and dead.
He gave it the breath of a human soul,
  He filled it with melodies all his own—
Hast thou heard the echoing thunder roll?
  Hast thou heard the low wave's murmuring tone?
Dost thou know a fiend's despairing cry?
  Dost thou know the note of an angel's singing,
The swish of a planet, the hush of a sigh?—
  Sounds like these through the reed went ringing.

Long centuries after, the Jews still kept
  That simple flute in their sacred heed.
They loved the spirit that in it slept
  Or woke to sob through the rough, hacked reed.

In the holy temple they gave it room,
  They hid its fibres with beaten gold ;
With one long wail, like a voice of doom,
  The music faltered and loosed its hold.
The splendid flute in its jewelled case
  Hangs voiceless now when the song is swelling ;
For song still chooses the rustic place,
  And steals away from the gilded dwelling.

THE END.

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